THE LIBERTY OF PRAYER

Asserted, and Garded from

LICENTIOUSNESS.

By a Minister of the Church of England.

Cum Judice fabulatur, & ad *ejus penetralia* Precator admittitur; *Neque ullus inde respuitur, nisi qui in oratione Tepidus invenitur.* Cass. in Psal.

Multoque melius est de duobus imperfectis Rusticitatem sanctam habere, quam Eloquentiam peccatricem. Hier. in ep. ad Nepot.

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THE PREFACE TO THE READER.

THE Deſign of this little Tract is not to make or Widen any *Breaches*: But rather to contribute ſome Endeavours towards the *Healing* of thoſe *Wounds* which Angry men delight ſtill to Vex and Torture: Nor would I Expoſe *Prayer* as Cheap and Contemptible to any, But make it Eaſy and *Familiar* to all. That ſuch as have but little Liſt to it, or Kindneſs for it, may ſee what *Need* there is of it, and be Quickened to it: And that others who have more Inclination this way, but find many *Rubs* and Perplexities lying be-

fore them, may ſee the *Paſſage clear'd*, and perceive that there are no ſuch Difficulties in it, but what any ordinary man, who means well, may Eaſily deal with: And ſo be Encouraged to proceed, And not Drag on Heavily, but find the Duty a Delight, And *Serve the Lord with Gladneſs.*

I confeſs the firſt *Occaſion* of this Diſcourſe was given by ſome Paſſages in Two *Sermons* upon *Eccleſ.* V. 2. Preach'd and lately Publiſh'd by a Reverend and Learned *Doctor*, whoſe Name I forbear to mention, Not for dread of a *Stab* from his Pen: But out of Regard to his Perſon, as well as Place, both upon the Account of what I have heard him, long ago, ſpeak from the Pulpit, in Defence of the Faith, Doctrine and Religion of the Church of *England*, expreſſed in her *Articles*: And alſo what I have ſeen, of late, in ſome of his Writings from the Preſs, to the ſame Intent: Particularly his juſt *Zeal* to Vindicate the Goſpel-Doctrine of our Bleſ-

ſed Saviour's *Satisfaction*, againſt the *Paganiſh* Principles of ſuch as imploy their Parts and Wit to *Ridicule* it.

Nor do I take upon me any Crimination of the main Contents of thoſe very *Sermons*, in which yet there is ſomewhat that I make bold to Reflect on. For as I know how greatly they are in *Vogue* with many, (who perhaps may like the *Eriſtical* ſquabling Subject, better than they do the old *Anti-Remmſtrant* Author:) So I profeſs my ſelf Beholden to him, for ſome curious *Notions* I learned from them: And do find a great deal more, wherein I heartily *Subſcribe* and *Conſent* to him: And all along, give him the due praiſe of his exact Method, his elaborate Periods, his ſurprizing Turns of Wit, and Quickneſs of Expreſſion. But there are other Words and Things he has dropt here and there, which, in my apprehenſion, ſeem not ſo agreeable to the *Genius* of the Goſpel: at which indeed I have ſtumbled: and am afraid they

may have but a ſorry Effect, in giving Prejudice to many more conſiderable than my ſelf: Yea to give the *Enemies of the Lord occaſion to Blaſpheme*: And to ſtartle the pious Souls of Weak Chriſtians, and make them afraid to *Stand faſt in the Liberty wherewith Chriſt hath made us Free.*

Not every florid *Harangue* trimm'd with *Witticiſms*, and pointed with *Sarcaſms*, to make the Juvenile *Academicks* Merry, is the moſt Edifying diſcourſe to Better the World. I can remember ſince ſuch *Athenian* Entertainments were Tranſporting *Muſick* to my ſelf: which now I Abhor as the moſt harſh and grating *Noiſes*. And I cannot applaud that for the *Beſt* Sermon, which makes the worſt part of the Audience moſt *Sport*. May I be ſo happy to ſpeak to the Conſcience and Satisfaction of Serious and Experienced *Chriſtians*: And I am in little care to Tickle the wanton ears of *Novices* in Religion, and Scoffers at *Devotion*.

But

But ſo far as I have ſomewhere briefly made bold to touch upon this Reverend *Divine*, 'Tis not in the bitter *Satyrical* ſtrain, wherein he has of late thought fit to handle his learned *Brother*. Indeed, (as ſome are ſtartled to obſerve a new ſort of *Calvinian* Rigor, and ſuch boiſterous Blaſts from that Point, which has a Name for the Mildeſt Quarter, ſo) I cannot but Admire to ſee men ſo freely deal their Blows, and let fly at others, for *Inſufferable Inſolence both of Stile and Temper*, crying out of them for *Infinitely Scornful, and Extreamly Spightful*: Thus ſeeming to *Forget that Duty* which (ſay they) *every man owes both to Decency and himſelf, always obliging him to ſpeak only as becomes him, however Adverſaries provoke him.* A good Rule, ſo apt to be forgotten, That he whom moſt tongues do praiſe for teaching us the *Government of the Tongue*, complains *It is a piece of Morality which ſober Nature dictates, and yet in Controverſies many of our greateſt Scholars ſeem* Animadv. p. 353.

totally to have Unlearn't it: Managing Disputes in Religion with such Virulence, that one would think the Disputants had put off much of Humanity, before they came thus to treat of Divinity.

Dec. Christ Pl. p. 279.

Nor should I have said any thing at all wherein this *Author* might have thought himself concerned, had not I fear'd, his Reflections might Hurt others, more than mine are like to Damnify him. But being equally Engaged with him in the Common Cause of Preaching the *Gospel*, As far as I understand it, Wo to me if I do it not. And when I know that Gospel to be no *Servile Yoke*, but a *Law of Liberty*: As such therefore I do appear for it. And whoever cry out of a Gap opened to *Licentiousness*, I think we should be in as much care to Maintain the *Liberty*, as to prevent the *Abuse*. Or else they who complain so much of the *Priest-Riding*, (however abusively they are wont to apply it; Yet) may pick out matter

matter for a juſt Charge, That we *Handle the word of God deceitfully*, and *Shun to declare to them all the Counſel of God*: And like *Lords over his heritage*, and Harder Maſters than *Chriſt*, withhold from them what he has *Granted* them: And Tie them up, where he has ſet them *Free*.

It will be no Surprize to me, If I find the Reward ſo commonly beſtowed on ſuch as write *Irenicums*, for Adjuſting and Compounding Litigious matters, *i. e.* To be pincht on both Sides. The *Anteſignani* that lead Contending Parties, thô all to pieces in every thing elſe, yet can meet and hold together, like *Sampſon's Foxes*, to carry *Firebrands*, and ſet the Fields all in a Flame. I know what the *Moderate man* uſes to be taken for, among ſuch furious Drivers: But I muſt beg their pardon, If I cannot take them for any of the beſt *Judges*. I had much rather be determined by our late moſt Reverend and Renowned Primate, (whoſe great Soul much diſdain'd the mean Service of our Squib-

bing

hing *Boutefeus*, that fill the *Church* with endleſs Noiſe, and Heat, and pother, about the *Mint*, *Anniſe* and *Cummin*: But was for having all ſuch *Bones* Buried before his *Own*); and I cannot forbear to quote a Golden *Paragraph*, worthy of ſuch an Excellent *Author*, in his Preface to a Collection of Biſhop *Wilkins* Sermons, vindicating the moſt deſerved Fame of that Right Reverend *Prelate*; ſays he, *I purpoſely mention his Moderation, and likewiſe adventure to Commend him for it; Notwithſtanding that this Vertue, ſo much eſteemed and Magnified by Wiſe men, in all Ages, has of late been Declaim'd againſt with ſo much Zeal and Fierceneſs, and yet with that good Grace and Confidence, as if it were not only no Vertue, but even the Sum and abridgement of all Vices. I ſay, notwithſtanding this, I am ſtill of the old opinion, That Moderation is a Vertue, and one of the peculiar ornaments and advantages of the excellent Conſtitution of our Church, and muſt at laſt be the temper of her Members, eſpecially the Clergy, if ever we ſeriouſly intend*

the firm Eſtabliſhment of this Church, and do not induſtriouſly deſign, by cheriſhing heats and diviſions among ourſelves, to let in Popery at thoſe Breaches.

I break not in upon any thing that is *Eſtabliſhed*, nor confront whatever for *Decency and Order* is Appointed: being well ſatisfied, That I can be a *Member* and *Miniſter* of the Church of *England*, and yet the *Lord's Free-man*. Yea whenever I look towards *Rome*, I cannot but bleſs his Name, That by the *Grace of God I am* Where, and *What I am*.

But I cannot think they are True to their *Lord*, nor Juſt to their *Church*, nor yet Kind to their *Brethren*, who would have men under their *Girdle*, where the Lord, and the Church both has left them at *Liberty*. What is ſo Graciouſly *Given* and *Granted*, I do Plead for, in behalf of every one that ought to Share in it. And if thou art contented with this, *Reader*, and craveſt no more, Take ſo much *Liberty*, without ſcruple, and much good may it do thee: And ſo *Farewell*.

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PART I.

THE *Liberty* of PRAYER Asserted.

The Introduction, *pleading for Prayer it self.*

THE *Liberty* of *Prophecying* (which is a *Disputable* Priviledge, and not belonging to many,) hath been Asserted by a famous *Author*: And why may not any one Assert the *Liberty of Prayer*, which is a Priviledge Uncontroverted, wherein every one in the World hath a Right? *Should not a People seek to their God?* Is not only the voice of Scripture, but the very Suggestion of *Nature*, to every Reasonable Creature, who in the sense of his Wants, is taught to *Seek* out for Supply; And when any thing ails him, to cry *O God!* And look out for Help from *Above*.

The ſame Light which ſhews us a *God*, teaches us alſo the Veneration of that *Almighty Being* which is ſo Superlatively Excellent. Pſal. 86. 9, 10. *All Nations whom thou haſt made ſhall come and worſhip before thee O Lord: And ſhall Glorify thy Name. For thou art Great, and doſt Wondrous things: Thou art God alone.* No *Ethnicks* that ever own'd any Deity, have denied *Invocation*: which is as the *Bucket* whereby we draw out of God's Infinite Fulneſs, to ſupply our wants. Even thoſe rude *Seamen*, *Jon.* 1. 5. *Cried every man to his God.* And St. *Paul* tells us, Rom. 10. 12. *There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek, For the ſame Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.* 'Tis the *Reaſonable Service* which every Wiſe conſidering man muſt needs chuſe and perform. Nor can we make any better Uſe of the *Reaſon* which God hath given us to *Know* Him: or of the *Speech* wherewith he hath endowed us to expreſs his *Glory*. Indeed our very *Precarious Beings* call us to *Prayers*: As all *Weak* things are taught by the *Dictates* of their own Nature, to make towards, and *Lean* upon, that which will Support them: The *Hop*, the *Vine*, the *Ivy*, (that cannot ſtand Themſelves,) With their wires and Tendrils catch hold on ſomewhat elſe to bear them up. So what ſhould poor *Derivative* Creatures but repair to the Almighty *Giver*, to be alſo the Continual *Preſerver* of their Being? When we feel our-ſelves ſtill verging to Nothing, And that we have no

no power to *hold our Souls* in Life one Moment: Whither ſhall we betake our ſelves, but to the *Root* of all Being for Support? And in the want of every thing, whither but to the *Fountain of all Goodneſs*, for Supply? We hang upon Him ſtill for our Being, and all the Comforts of it; who continues to Create us every moment. And Prayer is the Souls *Flying back* again to Him from whom it came: Who exacts our Devotions, as the Sun draws *Vapours* from the earth: Not to retain them for his own Benefit, but to rain them down in *Showers* of Mercy upon us. The *Debt* is owing to him, but the paying of it, only Advantageous to ourſelves: And in ſerving him, we ſerve our own beſt *Intereſt*.

He commands indeed many things above the power of *Nature*, to bring us upon our Knees for his *Grace*, that where our ſtrength *ends*, there our Prayers may *begin*: And that we may Seek for that in Him, which we have not in ourſelves. And tho the infinitely *Wiſe* and *Good* needs neither our Confeſſions, to *Inform* him of our Wants, Nor our Petitions to make him *Inclinable* to Relieve them: Yet he will be *Enquired* of by us, to do for us: And notwithſtanding He *Blots out our Tranſgreſſions for his Own Sake*: Yet he Calls on us to Call upon Him: And bids, *Put me in Remembrance*: *Let us plead together*: *Declare thou, that thou maiſt be juſtified.* Iſa. 43. 25. and 6. And by this means we come to Bethink our-

ſelves, From whence it is that we have all: That we may not impute to our *Good Luck*, what we owe to the *Divine Bounty:* Nor Undervalue the Favours of *Heaven*, coming ſo Lightly by them, without any *Seeking*. He will have us exerciſe our Repentance towards him, our Dependance upon him, and our Affiance in him: So to *Diſpoſe* us for the the Reception and Fruition of what we would have from him. And therefore Invites us to his *Gates*, that he may load us with his *Bleſſings:* And commands us to *Ask*, and *Seek*, and *Knock*, That we may receive, and *Find*, and *Enjoy*. This *Key* the Gracious God is pleas'd to put into our Hands, That we may go to all the inexhauſtible *Treaſures* of his Bounty, even as we go to our Table for Meat. That we who are ſo *Indigent* and Beggarly, may be throwly furniſhed with Him, who is *Able to do exceeding abundantly, even above all that we ask or think*. And O how well is it for us! And what riches of Grace from the Lord of Love, That the Gates of Heaven ſhall be open'd at our Knocking: That a Supply ſhall be Granted for our Asking: And that our diligent Seeking ſhall be rewarded with Finding Eternal Glory! O how would the *Courts* of *Kings* be thronged, if their Gates and Hearts and Hands were ſo Open to all Comers? If it were no more, but *Come* and *Ask* and *Have?*

It

It is not more needful for a Creature to live in *Dependance* on his Maker and Preſerver, But it is as full of ſweet Satisfaction, for poor frail *Inſufficient* wretches, who Want every thing, and lye open here ſtill to all Changes and Troubles and Dangers, To have an All-ſufficient Helper, and the ſafeſt Sanctuary to Repair to, and Solace our ſelves in. O what ſhould we do, and whither Betake our ſelves, if we had not this Happy *Retreat* to turn in at? If left Deſolate to ſhift for our ſelves, and make us a Happineſs or want it? O Kind word then from a Good God, *Come unto me*, and *Call upon me*. As if he ſhould ſay, Unload your heavy Hearts with me, And *Caſt your Care upon me*: Make known your Requeſts to me, and put the matter into my Hands; And I will take Care of you, and Provide for you. O the eaſy Acceſs that a poor ſoul has to the Throne of Grace! Where (as the good Biſhop *Hall* ſpeaks,) it is not *Death to draw nigh, before the Golden Scepter be extended.* No Time out of ſeaſon, No Perſon ſo inconſiderable, No Words ſo ordinary, no Boon ſo big, No Grant ſo hard, as to give the hearty Supplication a Repulſe, But riſing like a thin *Miſt* from the earth, it returns in a plentiful *Rain* of manifold Bleſſings.

Our kind *Redeemer* chides us that we make no more uſe of this ſweet and bleſſed Advantage. Joh. 16. 24. *Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my Name; Ask and ye ſhall receive, that your joy may be full.* And how well do we deſerve to go with-

out that, which we count not worth ſo much as the *Asking* for? O that we ſhould be ſo *Liſtleſs* to do our ſelves Good, when the *God of all Grace* is ſo Willing to be Kind? As it was ſaid of the Emperor *Severus*, (*Moleſtius erat illi nihil peti, quàm dare,*) It troubled him more to be Asked nothing, than to give much. And to the Courtier that made not bold with him, he would ſay, (*Quid eſt quod nihil petis?*) What's the matter, thou askeſt no Boon of me? Let me know what thou wouldſt have, that thou maiſt not complain, Thou art never the better for me. So does the Lord of Love delight to ſee the Face of his *Spouſe*, and to *Hear her Voice.* Cant. 2. 14. He ſollicites for Suiters, *Joh.* 4. 23. Waits to be Gracious: Loves the Opportunities of diſpenſing his Favours: And bids, *Look unto me and be ſaved, all the ends of the earth.* Iſa. 45. 22. So far is he, (who knows what Need we all have of Him,) from Diſcouraging any to Approach him, That he gives free leave and *Licenſe* to every one. All may come that *Will.* Nay it is not *As they Will*, But he has made it their *Duty* to Come: and all muſt be *Supplicants* or *Rebels.*

It is not then the Liberty to *Pray* or *Not* to Pray, that is to be Diſcourſed of: But the *Permiſſion* that every one has, to frequent the *Throne of Grace*: The Boldneſs to Ask, Seek, and Knock at Heaven's Gates: Yea and chiefly, The *Freedom of Addreſs*, any Where, at any Time or in any becoming Manner. Thô it be not at the *Church*,

Church, nor within *Canonical* Hours, nor juſt in this or that *Mode* and *Form*.

We are indeed *Bound* to it: But yet we muſt make a *Free will offering* of it, and be *Volunteers* at our Prayers. For if it be a *Forced-put*, it is not Religion. *Beaſts* might, but *Men* muſt not, be *Dragg'd* to God's Altar: nor be *Threatned* with Happineſs, nor *Clubb'd* into Heaven. No compulſion here, but by dint of *Argument*, and the charms of *Perſwaſion*: When we are ſo Convinc'd and wrought upon, that we know not how to *Stand out* againſt that, which appears every way ſo Rational, Needful and Beneficial.

This *Liberty of Praying*, (*i. e.* All the Liberty which Nature and Scripture give: So as not to run into that *Licentiouſneſs*, which I ſhall take care to *Gard* it from in the *Second Part* of this Diſcourſe): It may be conſidered, Not only as to the *Leave* and Encouragement Given, from Heaven, to our Prayers: And the fair *Invitation* made, (with Aſſurance of good Welcome and Happy Succeſs, to *All Fleſh* that come to Him,) by the *God that Heareth Prayers*: (And who is pleaſed therefore to put that property among his *Titles*, As a mighty Attractive, to draw us with comfortable Expectation, to Him:) But the *Liberty of Praying* will admit of a more particular conſideration, with reſpect to the *Matter*, *Manner*, *Time* and *Place* of Prayer: And the *Perſons*, both Praying, and Prayed for.

CHAP. I.

The Liberty of Praying, as to the Matter.

FOR the *Matter* of Prayer, or the *Petenda* which we may put on for: There is a very Large Grant, and as much *Scope* given as any one can tell how to wish. Mat. 21. 22. *All things whatsoever ye shall ask in Prayer, Believing, ye shall receive.* It leaves out nothing Desirable, that a man can *Need*, or has the Boldness to *Crave*. But yet when words are too Wide for the *Matter*, they must be Limited according to the *Mind* of the Author. Which Rule is here to take place; For who can imagine that our *Lord* would put us upon Praying for things *Unlawful*? things that would *Dishonor* him to Grant, and *Ruin* us to Have? which yet would be comprehended under *All things whatsoever*, taken without any *Limitation*. Who can imagine, That he should ever countenance the *Wanton* Praying for Health to fulfil his *Lusts*? Or the *Malicious* for opportunity to execute his *Rage*? Or the *Ambitious* for High places to gratify his *Pride*? Or the *Covetous* Praying for the Death of all that stand between him and an *Estate*? Or the *High-way man* for rich Booty, and Success in his adventures and *Villany*.

Men may be ashamed to make their Tongues the *Index* of their Minds, as to such *Extravagant* De-

Desires, which yet notwithstanding may find harbor in their Hearts. But these wild and wicked Requests, be sure, are none of the Petitions which our *Holy Saviour* emboldens us to offer. The *Devil*, that is very free of what is none of his own, will promise without Exception, as he did to *Christ* himself, *All these things will I give thee.* But by our Lord's *All*, we must never understand any more than is *Lawful* and *convenient*: What is Fit for us to Ask, And what he has promised to *Bestow*: i. e. *The Kingdom of God, and his Righteousness*: With the addition of such Worldly *Appendages*, as his Wisdom knows proper and Good for us. Spiritual accomplishments, and Temporal Advantages too: Even all needful to bring us to *Heaven*: And, till we reach thither, to *Support* us on Earth. But we must not offer *Unreasonable* Requests, To have all that a roving Fancy can tower up: Or for *Impossible* things, That God should *falsify* his Word, to save us *without Holiness*: Nor put him upon the expence of *Miracles*, to make us on a suddain, The most Learned or Great in the world: Nor *Limit the Holy One* to just the particulars of our naming: As the mother of *Zebedee*'s children, *That the one might sit on the Right, and the other on the Left Hand, in his Kingdom*: Nor *Tempt the Lord our God*, to *turn Stones into Bread*, Asking to be fed in our Sloth, and carelessness to help our selves. But *All things* we have Liberty to ask, That make for the *Glory* of our Lord, and for our own real *Good* here, and our Eternal *Salvation* hereafter.

after. Indeed what he would have us Importune our Father which is in Heaven for, He hath given us a *Catalogue* of, in that beſt *Platform* of Prayer, by which all ours are to be Modelled: *i. e.* To mind firſt the *Glorifying* and *Pleaſing* of God, And then the Serving of our own turns. The Bleſſings of Wiſdom's *Right Hand*, Such as the Pardon of ſin, the Knowledge of our Lord's Will, the Graces of God's Spirit, and Eternal Life, We are to pray for Urgently and *Abſolutely*, Becauſe the things cannot chuſe but prove for our *Good*: And we cannot Glorify God, and do Well without them. Light and Grace, and Sanctification, and the *Spirit of Supplication*, we muſt ſeek before Gifts, and Peace, and Conſolation: Becauſe we may go *Weak and Troubled* to Heaven: But if we know not *God's ways* we ſhall not *Enter into his Reſt*: And *without Holineſs no ſeeing the Lord*.

Then the *World's Good*, and what concerns our preſent *Well-being* in it, As Food and Raiment, Health and Eaſe, Deliverance and Quiet, Fruitful ſeaſons, and Proſperous circumſtances, We may pray for too; and not count it *Carnal* to Seek after even thoſe things which the *Gentiles* do; When our Heavenly Father, not only knows we have *Need of them*, but alſo by his Command, makes it our Duty to *Ask* them: And by his *Promiſe*, gives us Encouragement to Ask in Hopes of Receiving them. We may Beg ſo much of the *World's Good*, as will really do us *Good*: Yea and deſire what ſhall *Comfort*, as well

well as *Support* us: In caſe it do not Hinder, but Promote, our *Duty*. Tho' we dread the Beſt things of this World, for our *Portion*, Yet even theſe temporal Fruitions are deſirable, on Condition, That we may thereby *Honour* our Lord, and Secure our *Salvation*. For we are not ſure, that thoſe *Means* will effectually promote theſe *Ends*. God knows whether we ſhall be *Better*, in a Rich, Healthy, Proſperous, Or in a Poor, Sick, and Troubled ſtate. He is ſometimes Kindeſt to us, In *Denying* us what we are Eagereſt upon. *The Chuſing of our Inheritance for us* then, we had beſt Refer to Him: And be well pleaſed to be at his *Finding*, however he is pleaſed to uſe us.

But yet in the *Conditional* Petition even for Temporal things, we are not ſo Tied up, as to ask what comes to *Nothing* at all, and leave the matter juſt as we found it. There is more Liberty here, than for the *Sick* man to pray as much for the Continuance or Increaſe of his *Diſeaſe*, as to have it Mitigated or Removed. The Requeſt may be *Abſolute*, only attended with a ſignified or a Silent *Submiſſion* to the wiſe and good Diſpoſal of the great *Lord* of all, tho' he ſhould determine otherwiſe. We may heartily *Deſire* the thing: But yet not be ſo *Set* upon it, as to deſire it in any Caſe, Tho' God ſhould be *Offended*, or our Souls *Damnified*, if not Undone by it. We may deſire *Honor*, the better to ſerve the Publick Good: And *Wealth*, more to *Honor the Lord*, and Cheriſh the Poor, with our

our *Subſtance*: And *Health*, and *Strength*, and *Length of Days*, That we may be more *Serviceable* in our generation, and bring greater Glory to our Heavenly Father. Provided ſtill, we humbly *Reſign* our Wills to His, and take it Patiently, Tho' we be Croſs'd, and fail of our Wiſhes: Yea perſwading our ſelves, then, It is *Beſt* for us, that ſo it ſhould be. The *World's* good things we muſt deſire but *Sparingly*, As not being ſure but they may Succeed no better to us, than the *Quails* to the *Iſraelites*, to make us the Worſe for them. But *Covet earneſtly the Beſt Gifts*, thoſe Holy qualifications, and Heavenly Bleſſings that *Accompany Salvation*, which will certainly do us Good, and make us Happy. Whether we come in, or be left out of the Diſtribution of ſuch *Common Favours*, as God, with an *Indifferent* hand, ſcatters among all ſorts of men, That we may be *Remembred with the Favour which He bears to his People, and Viſited with the Joy of his Salvation*. Little need have we to mind the *Stuff* here, when all the Good of the *Promiſed Land* is before us. And how well may that be called *All*, which takes in whatever the Largeſt Soul of man can wiſh?

We cannot ask the thing that is not there,
Blaming the Shallowneſs of our Requeſt. Herb.

His is the *Power*, to whom we Pray: And his Hand is never *ſhortned*, But with the greateſt *Eaſe*, can Effect whatever we would have.

Let

Let us not then be *Streightned* in our Prayers, when we have ſo much *Liberty* given us: And we cannot *Open our mouths* ſo wide, but He whoſe *Gift is Eternal Life*, has promiſed to *Fill them*: And to pleaſure us not only to the *Half*, but even the *Whole* of his Kingdom. And what more can we Ask or think, than *All Heaven*, and *Glory everlaſting*, with whatever is *Conducing* Here, to bring us Safe thither?

Poor Chriſtian, who art Humble and Contrite, *Trembling at Gods Word*, Be not Modeſt in thy own *Wrong*: When thou art allowed to Enlarge thy Deſires as wide as to what's *Infinite*: Loſe it not for want of *Asking*. Thou mayſt think a *Crown and Kingdom*, moſt Glorious and never failing, too *Good* for thee, a Sinful wretch, to expect: But they are not too *Great* for the God *Infinitely Good*, to Beſtow. This is the drift of all thy Prayers: No leſs thou art to beg, than *Chriſt*, and with him *All things*: In this world, the Knowledge, and Love, and Obedience of Gods *Truth*, and in the world to come, *Life everlaſting*. And that End of thy Faith, *The Salvation of thy Soul*, as it muſt be the *Aim*, ſo it will be the *Conſequence* of thy Prayers. For *whoſoever ſhall Call on the Name of the Lord ſhall be Saved.* Rom. 10. 13. Do but Ask as thou ſhould'ſt, and thou ſhalt Have what thou Wilt.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

The Liberty of Praying, as to the Manner.

THE *Liberty of Praying* is not ſo great for the *Matter*, But it is yet greater for the *Manner*. If *Men* will not go to Tye us up, where *God* hath left us *Free*. For tho' our *Lord* hath Limited us, as to the Particulars to to be asked: So, that we are to ask nothing, but what may be Reduced to ſome of the *Heads* which he hath preſcribed: Yet who could ever think that he tyed us up only to thoſe very *Words*? When as all Supplicants ſtill, (together with, or without thoſe,) have been accuſtomed to other *Words*: And yet not feared to tranſgreſs the *Order* of our Saviour.

But by this Liberty of the *Manner* of Prayer, I underſtand, The Freedom and *Boldneſs of Addreſs*: Uſing of the *Voice* or not: Long Prayers or *Short*: *Plain* or *Elegant*: This *Poſture* or that: A *Form* or none: *One* Form or *another*: Chuſing which *Part* ſhall go firſt: And *Altering*, *Adding*, or *Diminiſhing*, according as we ſhall judge moſt Agreeable and Beneficial to our ſelves and others.

SECT.

SECT. 1.

Of the Freedom and Boldneſs of Addreſs.

NOtwithſtanding the infinite *diſtance* between us, and the *moſt High God:* We are encouraged to *come Boldly to the Throne of Grace.* Heb. 4. 16. Provided we Remember that we are *Creatures*, We are not to forget that we are *Children:* Children indeed of the *moſt High:* Yet *Behold, God is Mighty, and Deſpiſeth not any.* Job 36. 5. As we muſt Manage our priviledge ſo that the *Goodneſs of God may not cauſe us to forget his Greatneſs:* (as the *Doctor* gives a good Caution:) So, *Vice verſâ*, That his *Greatneſs* may not cauſe us to forget his *Goodneſs.* As it is ſaid of *Luther*, That he prayed, (*Tantâ Reverentiâ, ut ſi Deo, Tantâ Confidentiâ ut ſi Amico:* So Reverently as to *God*, ſo Confidently as to his *Friend.* For tho' God be the greateſt King, Yet he takes not ſo much *State* as the Meaneſt. For what King keeps a Court ſo Open, as to give Admittance to *All Comers?* Or tho' they Get in, every one muſt not look to *Speed.* But he that lives never ſo *Obſcure* on Earth, may go when he will, and Speak to the *King of Heaven:* Who not only *Authorizes* our *Acceſs*, but *Invites* us into his Preſence: And likes us ſo much the Better, the *More* we aſk: And is Kinder and Better to us, than all the beſt and *Serm. p.* 112.

and deareſt *Friends* we have in the world.

God's Children have not received *The Spirit of Bondage again to Fear: But the Spirit of Adoption whereby they cry Abba Father.* Rom. 8. 15. Not to *Fear?* Why 'tis *Madneſs* not to Fear Him, at whoſe mercy we lye, and who hath the *Power* of us, to do what he will with us: No ſuch *Hearts-eaſe*, as to feel our hearts ſoftned into an Awful regard of the Glorious *Majeſty* of the World, To Reverence his Name, and to be afraid to Loſe and Offend Him. Such as *Fear* him are call'd upon to *Praiſe* him. Pſal. 135. 20. His filial Fear is not Inconſiſtent with his cheerful Praiſes. Who do ſo Fear him, have indeed moſt cauſe to Praiſe him, That by his Grace, he has wrought them to ſuch a *Child-like* diſpoſition. Nay the very repreſentations of God as a Terrible Judge, a *Conſuming Fire*, may do us the greateſt Kindneſs, To Haſten our flight from *the Wrath to come:* (As any one would give us cauſe of many Thanks, to Affright us from a deadly *Precipice*, upon which he ſaw us ready to run and to be Ruined:) But then the Fear which God's children have of him, is not a *Slaviſh* tormenting Dread, to affright them from Him, But ſuch a Caution and Circumſpection, as drives them out of dangers *Home* to Him, to *Shelter under his Wings.* Still they are to look upon him, clad in Garments of *Salvation*, as well as of *Majeſty: Benevolous* to his Creatures, and eſpecially *Good to the Soul that Seeks him:* Not *Hard*, but only

ly to be *Provoked*: and *eaſie to be Intreated*: Full of Invitation, and all Encouragements and Endearments, to raiſe Hope, and enflame our Love. Not inviting us to Him, for any *Ends* upon us, but only to be *Good* to us: Loving all the occaſions to *Exert* his Bounty, and can deny the children of his *Family* no reaſonable Requeſt. Yea as much delighting to Give, as we to Receive: As the Mother is no leſs pleas'd to have her Breaſts *Drawn*, than the Child to *Suck*. Nor does he part with his mercies, as one that is with *Difficulty* drawn to it: But only ſtays, till we are *Ready* to receive the things we ask, *i.e.* indeed till they will do us *Good*. (For till we are Ready for them, they are not Good for us.) And our Prayers are not to make him more *Willing*, but to make us more *Prepared*.

We muſt not go to God then *Diſcouraged* with a Servile *Dread*, but repair to Him, as to a *Father*: Tho' offended, yet *Willing* to be Reconciled: And therefore puts us on to *Ask* our Pardon, that we may Receive it. And that he who will not *Clear the Guilty*, ſhould yet be no Terror to any pious Souls in *Chriſt Jeſus*, *Who* are *Accepted in the Beloved*, even as if they had not Sinned. And *Who ſhall lay any thing to the Charge of Gods Elect?* When there is nothing in God Againſt them, but all For them. He that is of *Purer Eyes than to Behold Iniquity*, Sees none in them, but what he has received an *Atonement* for. And ſo for all the Faults in them, *Fury is not in Him*. He is a Friend even to *Sin-*

ners, in Him that hath Satisfi'd for their Sins. When they *Look unto Jesus*, That is their Worshipping towards the *Temple*, where God is *Propitious*. And when we are apt to be *Astonished* at the infinite Greatness and Majesty, the Justice and Purity of *God*, Let us Bethink ourselves, That yet we have to do with a God *Satisfied for our Sins*; and, in the *Son of his Love*, Reconciled to our Souls. And thô we have no other *Door* of Admission into the *Divine* Presence, Yet we have *Boldness, and access with Confidence, thrô the Faith of Him*, who is The *Propitiation for our sins*. Out of this *Angel*'s Hand, the Smoak of the *Incense* that comes with the *Prayers of the Saints*, ascends up before God with a grateful *Perfume*. *Rev.* 8. 4. And nothing fails that is put into his Hands, who Heartens all his members and followers, *John* 15. 7. *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, You shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you. Having therefore Boldness to enter into the Holiest by the Blood of Jesus*, And such a high Priest, as is *Holy, Harmless, Undefiled, Separate from Sinners*, and *made Higher than the Heavens*, where he *Ever lives to make Intercession for us*: And is *Able also to save to the uttermost, all that come unto God thrô Him*: We are to *Draw nigh with a true heart, in full Assurance of Faith*. Heb. 7. 25. and 6. Ch. 10. 19, 22.

Upon this *Satisfaction* and *Mediation* of the Beloved of God's Soul, *In whom he is Well pleased*, is grounded all (the παῤῥησία) that Free-

dom

dom of Speaking uſed by the Children of God, which makes them ſo *Bold* with their Heavenly Father: And yet no more Bold than *Welcome*. This makes them ſo *Importunate* and preſſing, Yea ſo Daring, as even to *Argue* and reaſon the caſe with their *Maker* and *Judge*: and as it were, to *Quarrel with his Mercy*: (as Biſhop *Hacket* expreſſes it.) To enter the *Liſts* with Omnipotence, and *Wreſtle* for the Bleſſing: To *Capitulate* and Plead with God, by Arguments drawn from his Promiſe, his Mercy, his Glory, his Son's Merits: and their own Neceſſities, Experiences, Hopes, and Dependancies. Not thinking ſo to *Change* Him, But to Excite that *Faith* in him, which their Prayers are to Lean upon. As Prayer, *reciprocally*, ſtirs up and Enflames our Faith: When we eye the Promiſes of God, and take the *Boldneſs* to ask, all that he has the *Goodneſs* to Promiſe. *Remember thy Word unto thy ſervant, upon which thou haſt cauſed me to Hope.* Pſal 119. 45. And to put the God of Truth in mind of his Promiſe: To ſpread before him (the *Chirographum*) his own Hand-writing, How Powerful muſt it be to Prevail with him? As *Melanction* ſaid of *Luther*, He over-heard him at his private Prayers, as if he had had ſome body to diſcourſe withal, in the *Room* with him. And as *S. Chryſoſtom* obſerves of the woman, *Mat.* 15. 27. (φιλοσοφεῖ ἡ γυνὴ) The poor woman turn'd *Philoſopher*, to Diſpute the mercy out of *Chriſt*'s hands: *Truth Lord,*

Chriſtian Conſol. p. 129.

yet the dogs eat the Crumbs that fall from their Masters Table. Thus *the Violent take the Kingdom of Heaven by Force*: By such *Striving* in Prayer, and improving all the advantageous seasons of Address: Putting on so far, till some may count them *Rude* and *Sawcy*, That they may not fail to *Speed*, for sparing to *Speak*. *Tell not the troubled heart of Modesty,*

Christian Consol p. 128.

'Tis a Complement it will not be tyed to: (said the Bishop of ours that was called a second *Chrysostom*, for his Golden sayings:) *The Passions of an Afflicted Spirit are not in good compass, till carried beyond ordinary Rule and fashion.* Vehemence of Zeal will Break out, and Transport the devout Soul so far, as a cold Heart will think *Unseemly*. As *Gehazi* would have thrust away the Mournful *Shunamite*, for her Rudeness, 2 *Kings* 4. When she ran and catch'd the *Prophet* by the Feet: But he excus'd for her, *verse* 27. *Let her alone, for her Soul is vexed in her.* When we are upon the Stretch in Prayer, As *Elias* strain'd himself, (προσευχῇ προσηύξατο) *Jam.* 5. 17. This is the *Vis Deo grata*. Tertul. Such a *Forcible* Attempt upon our Lord, As he will not Chide us for. And so does the Almighty *God* delight to be *Overcome*, and yield to a Man, To the man, that is such a *Passionate* Seeker, *Intreating his gracious Favour, with the whole Heart.* And this is the *Resistance* that makes the Devil *Fly*: But he never stirs at the Recital of a few *Livelesse* words of course: Nor is at all concerned to Hinder

Hinder the Prayer, that is no *Praying in the Holy Ghoſt.*

Indeed it ill beſeems them to make ſo *Bold* in Prayer, who take all *profane* Boldneſs elſewhere. But it well becomes the *Children of the Kingdom*, who know whom they have *Believed*, to be *Bold in their God*, and *Delight themſelves in the Lord.* Not to be Dragg'd to Prayer, as their *Drudgery*, which they do only becauſe they *Muſt*: Nor to hang back, as afraid to ſpeak to their *Father*: But count it *Good for them to Draw nigh to God*: And go to him, as the *Center* of their Reſt, and their *Exceeding Joy.* Taking his Service for *Perfect Freedom*, A *Labour of Love*, A ſweet Heavenly Imployment, and a matter of the chiefeſt Delight.

Now that we are not clogg'd with coſtly *Sacrifices*, and an intolerable *Yoke* of Ceremonies, as of old: But ſomewhat that coſts us a great deal Leſs, will be much Better taken: And nothing now indeed is asked, but what is *Cheap* to be given: Nothing impoſed, but what we may make *Pleaſant* to be performed: Under this *Goſpel-Diſpenſation*, we ſhould have a *Goſpel Spirit*, Rejoycing in the Service of our *Lord*, who hath *Pleaſure in the Proſperity of his Servants.* While others lye without, Eſtranged from Him, And are only *Troubled*, whenever they *Remember* Him: His *Children* Thirſt after him, Run to him, and find ſweet Welcome with him. At this *Retreat* they turn in, and under the *Shadow of his Wings* are Safe and Quiet,

Easy and Comfortable, whatever happens. And whoever shuns, or objects against the Service, All the world shall not put them out of Conceit with that, in which they have found such *Heavenly Satisfaction.* They will rather be driven out of the *World*, than out of their *Prayers.* (As *Daniel* would Venture being cast into the *Lyons Den*, rather than forbear to Pray and make Supplication before his God: Counting it a more Material point to Secure his *Prayers*, than to Save his *Life.*) For that they have never such Joys as on their *Knees*, And their *Prayer-Times* are the sweetest Times of their lives; When *Heaven is Opened* to them, and all the *Goodness of the Lord passes before them*, And they are not so Dazzled at his *Glory*, but they see the *Joy of his Salvation*: See his *Face with Joy*, And find him *Favourable to them, Praying to Him.* Job. 33. 26. And feel then what they desire might be continually Felt, Themselves q. lost in an infinite Ocean of Sweetness.

Softness, and Peace, and Joy, and Love, and Bliss,
Exalted Manna, *Gladness of the best.*
How should I praise thee Lord! How should my
Gladly engrave thy Love in Steel, (*Rhimes*
If what my Soul doth feel sometimes,
My Soul might ever feel.
Of what an easy quick Access:
My Blessed Lord art thou! How suddenly
May our Requests thy Ears invade!
To hear what Stare dislikes not easiness. Herb.

No great Man ſo *Eaſy* to be ſpoke to, and dealt with, as the *Great God.* We may tell him all, and pour out our very *Hearts* before him, As we would into the Boſom of our moſt Dear and Intimate *Friend.* And if our *Heart condemn us not, for Regarding Iniquity in it,* Then have we *Confidence towards God,* and a great *Liberty* of ſpeaking, when not checkt with the Conſcience of *Allowed* Guilt. Yea tho' we know our ſelves to be Sinful, Yet may we hope in Him, with whom is *Plenteous Redemption,* To give us both *Pardon* of our Sins, and *Grace* to ſave us from them. And we are not to confeſs them to Him, as to an *Inexorable Judge,* but the *Beſt of Fathers,* Who knows our *Frame,* and makes merciful *Allowance* for our *Frailty.* And what is the *Saviour* for, but to help out *Sinners*? And why does he bid us pray every day, *Forgive us our Treſpaſſes,* But becauſe he knows we ſtill Need, and he is as forward to Grant that *Forgiveneſs*? If we were not *Heavy-Laden,* we were not called to come to Him for *Reſt.* It eaſes the Heavy heart, but to *Pour it out,* Eſpecially to Him, who hath not only a Heart to pity us, but all Power in his Hands to Relieve us. *Be careful for nothing, then, But in every thing by Prayer and Supplication, with Thankſgiving, Let your Requeſts be made known unto God: And the Peace of God which paſſeth all underſtanding, ſhall keep your hearts and minds thro' Chriſt Jeſus. Phil.* 4. 6. 7. Even when we are under his Correction, 'Tis child-like ſtill to Hanker

after him, as a *Father*: And not leave off, but follow him even with our *Broken* performances, when we are not able for Better Service. Tho' he ſeems *Angry* at our Prayers, 'Tis the more Acceptable, when we will after him, even ſtruggling under our *Load*. For little thanks to go on, when Brib'd, as it were, with the *ſweets* of Devotion, as our Pay in hand. And thô we are ſometimes more dry and Barren, It will be never the worſe for us, when it teacheth us that Humility and Submiſſion, which may be better to us than the Joy and Chearfulneſs. No Dulneſs and Diſtractions, *Involuntary* and *Bewailed*, ſhall ever be Imputed. But God may *Accept* us, even when we *Loath* our ſelves. For he regards not the Blemiſhes of their Services, who are in *Chriſt Jeſus*, and offer the Beſt they have. But looks on what they *Deſire* to do, and what his *Son* has done, to fill up all that is wanting in them: And then their *Willing minds*, United to his Compleat *Righteouſneſs*, are ſuch Sacrifices wherein God is *Well pleaſed*. For the *Mediator*s ſake, he Pardons our *Worſt*, and Accepts our *Beſt*, Thô even the Beſt be ſuch as has need of *Pardon*. He will *Spare us as a man ſpares his own Son that ſerveth him*. And knowing our *Indigence*, He expects not that we ſhould come to him as *Purchaſers*, but as *Beggars*. Not to bring water to the *Fountain*, but only an *Empty Veſſel*, And come becauſe we are *Athirſt*: Yea *take the Water of Life freely*. Rev. 22. 17. Receiving at his hands, not becauſe we are *Worthy*,

but

but becauſe we are *Needy*, And boaſt not, with the *Phariſee*, how well we are provided, But bewail our Miſery to incline his Pity. He knows we are Faulty, even in the *Confeſſing* of our Faults, And that our very *Praying* for Pardon has need of his *Pardon:* But he allows for Frailties, and has *Compaſſion on our Infirmities.* When therefore we Serve him *Sincerely*, we may do it *Chearfully*, Thô it be (God knows) very imperfectly.

Let us then, in no wiſe, be tempted to leave off: But, as our Bleſſed Saviour himſelf encourages, *Pray always, and not Faint.* Believing we ſhall have what we Ask, Or that which ſhall be as Good, or Better. And he is not *Croſſed*, or he meets with a Happy *Croſs*, who gets more than he asked. We ſhall ſure be the *Better* for our Prayers, If but to keep up our *Correſpondence* with Heaven. For as Friends are apt to grow ſhy and ſtrange, for want of Viſits and *Intercourſe:* So we ſhall contract a ſad *Strangeneſs* between God and our Souls, by the *Neglect* of our Prayers. But the oftener we go to Him, and the More we are taken up with Him, The greater Intereſt and Aſſurance ſhall we get, And can make the *Bolder*, upon all occaſions, to ſpeak for our ſelves and others. With what Confidence do we go to an able and old *Tried Friend*, of whoſe Kindneſs we have had frequent Experience, and who never ſhews weary of us, but ſtill calls upon us, to come to him, and make uſe of him?

It

It is a high and wonderful Strain, *Isa.* 45. 11. (If it be a *Grant*, and not a *Check*: If it be an Encouragement, and not a Correction of *Boldneſs*,) *Thus ſaith the Lord, the Holy One of Iſrael, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my Sons, and concerning the work of my hands, Command ye me.* As ſome tranſlate and point it with an *Interrogative* note, 'Tis, Will you offer ſo to take upon you, as to *Preſcribe* to me? (which ſenſe indeed the foregoing Verſe ſeems to favour.) But in the common Rendring and pointing, It is a *Permiſſion* and allowance from God himſelf to his people, To require at his hands, what they would have: *i. e.* To ſignify their minds, (for taking it thus, we muſt ſuppoſe a *Catachreſis* in it:) and to ask of him with as much *Confidence*, as of thoſe whom they have *power* to Command. Or (as Biſhop *Wilkins* gloſſes upon it,) In your asking of me, you may be as ſure of Succeſs, as of the things which are in your own Power to *Command*.

O infinite Condeſcention in Him, who *Humbles himſelf even to Behold the things that are in Heaven*, When he will ſo vouchſafe to take Notice of poor Worms at his *Footſtool* on Earth! With what Courage and Comfort and mighty expectation, may we go to the *God of all Grace*, who hath erected a *Throne of Grace*, on purpoſe for us to Repair to, who are Caſt at the Tribunal of Juſtice? And ordained his own Son, the moſt prevailing *Maſter of Requeſts*, to Sollicite for us, and make our unworthy Prayers as Current

rent and *Authentick* even as the moſt juſt and powerful Commands.

SECT. II.

The Liberty of Uſing the Voice *or not.*

PRayer is the proper work of the *Heart*, Lifting up itſelf, and preſenting its Deſires to the Lord. It is only the Heart that *Prays*, The *Mouth* can but *Say Prayers.* And, as many *Words* of Prayer may be ſpoken, by one that doth not Pray at all: So another may *(Tacendo clamare)* Pray heartily and effectually, who yet ſays never a Word. *Words*, let them be never ſo Appoſite and pithy, are not Prayer, but only the *Vehicle* of Prayer, and the outward Signification of our minds. 'Tis all one to Him who *ſearcheth Hearts*, and knoweth the *Meaning* of the Spirit, Whether we ſend up to him our *Naked* Deſires, or *Cloathed* with Expreſſions. He that Hears us without *Ears*, Underſtands us without our *Words*: and needs not our *Voices* to tell him what we would have. It is at our own Choice then, Whether we will uſe our *Tongues* or no, every time we make our Prayers. If we have the *Spirit of Supplications*, we may offer up the *Mental Prayer*, and hold our peace. *i. e.* Humbly bethinking our ſelves of our Wants, and earneſtly craving and waiting for Supply from Above. As *Hannah ſpake in her Heart, only her Lips moved, but her Voice was not heard,*

1 *Sam.*

1 *Sam.* 1. 13. The Deſires of the Heart are ſometimes too *Big* to come out of the Mouth. And then we pray more by *Sighs and Groans*, than by Speech and Phraſes. And ſo, (as Biſhop *Hall* ſpeaks) *Our Silence may be more Devout than our Noiſe.* And to this ſort of Prayer, no Book or Learning, no Invention or Utterance are requiſite. They that cannot *Indite*, nor ſo much as *Read*, or well Expreſs themſelves, Yet can *Think* what moſt *Troubles* them, and *Ruminate* on their Wants and Grievances: And they can alſo Think what they would be moſt glad to *have*, And raiſe up their Hearts in *Wiſhes* and Longings and deſires of help and Relief, at the hands of God. And they can alſo *Bethink themſelves* of any others that are more *Wretched*, and worſe than themſelves, And let their Souls then *Bleſs the Lord*, for all happy Reſpects, in which he hath made them to *Differ*. And all this ſeriouſly and devoutly managed, with the Soul, and *all Within us*, is good Praying, thô *not a word ſaid*. And in ſuch Offices, we are only concerned, to inſpect our *Hearts*, and look to the *Frame* they are in, And need not the uſual *Vigilance*, to take care that there be a good *Agreement* between them and our *Tongues*, And that theſe run not on before or without the other, to draw nigh to God with our *Lips*, when our *Hearts* are far from him.

But (if I ſhall ſpeak my own thoughts and experience) I take this way of Prayer, among moſt men, to be more fine in *Speculation* than

uſeful

uſeful in Practice. I only mention the *Liberty* which they have to Uſe it, who can make any thing of it, and find it available to anſwer the Ends of Prayer. But as *Words* are of great and continual Uſe to expreſs our Thoughts, So I cannot but think them as uſeful to Fix our minds, and Affect our hearts, To Enflame our deſires, to regulate our devotion, and to Engage all our Faculties to a due Attendance on the Work we are about. That it may not be a thin *Notional* Buſineſs, Too *Spiritual* for us to perceive it, Or too *Nice* and difficult for us to diſcern when it is at a *Stand*, or how it *Proceeds*. And as long as we have the Uſe of *Tongues*, Why ſhould not he that Made them, have them Imployed in his Service? We are not only to *Think* Prayers, but to *Open our Lips, that our Mouths may ſhew forth his Praiſe.* Pſal. 141. 1. *I cried to the Lord with my Voice, with my Voice to the Lord did I make my Supplication.* He that is to Hear, teacheth us what to Say, *When ye Pray, Say, Our Father*, &c. *Hoſ.* 14. 2. *Take with you Words, and turn to the Lord, And ſay to him, Take away all Iniquity, and receive us graciouſly, ſo will we render the Calves of our Lips.* (The only *Fatlings* which we are now to offer.) If Words be needful to Digeſt our Thoughts, and ſhape the *Ideas* that ariſe out of our Minds, If they make us more Senſible of the things which we Conceive, And a *Happy* Expreſſion that exactly fits our Meaning gives ſuch a *Pleaſure*, as the Joy of a *New-born Child*: Then in our Addreſſes

dreſſes to *God*, where we have need of all Helps, where we ought to have the Livelieſt ſenſe, and our Dulneſs wants to be Excited by *Pathetick* words, and all Quickening means: We may find it very advantageous to the Service, to form our Notions into agreeable Expreſſions: Yea thô we are by our ſelves, Yet to ſpeak in our *Own Hearing*, ſuch Words of Prayer, as we find conducing to Compoſe our thoughts, and ſet our Affections afloat, and make us in Earneſt upon it, *Fervent in ſpirit, ſerving the Lord.*

Here then, where we are under no Limitation, but left to ourſelves, Whether we will, at all times, *Think* or *Speak* our Prayers, Our care muſt be, to take that way, which helps us to perform our offices Beſt, and makes us moſt Sincere, and Lively, Zealous and Devout. That we may do all *Heartily, as to the Lord*, and *Approve* ourſelves unto God, In being curious to Examine and Diſcern what is Beſt; and Conſcientious to *Hold in* words, or *Pour them out*, thereafter as we find them to Help, or elſe Hinder us in the Service.

SECT. III.

The Liberty to Uſe Long *Prayers or* Short.

Length or *Brevity* are ſuch Indifferencies as do not enter the *Eſſence* of Prayer. For either of them may be Good or Bad, thereafter as they are *Deſigned* and *Uſed*. A *Short* Prayer, made

made ſo through diſlike and *Wearineſs* of God's Service: And a *Long* one ſtretch'd out in Pride and *Oſtentation* of Parts, or Affectation to be *Tedious*, that we may be thought more *Pious*, are both of them, equally *Abomination to the Lord.* But when we *Contract* our Prayers, that we may ſtrengthen our *Devotion*, and cut them *Shorter*, to make them the *Livelier:* Such *Short Prayers* ſhall prove long enough to reach to *Heaven:* And ſo we Pray much, thô we ſay but Little. And again, when we Enlarge our Prayers, as we find our Hearts *Enlarged*, Our Attention and Affection keeping pace with our Matter and Expreſſions, we need not fear the guilt of that *Much-Speaking*, condemned, *Matth.* 6. 7. Nor of the *Long Prayers*, Chap. 23. 14. made a *Pretence* to *Eat up the Widows.* When the *Spirit of God Moves on the face of the Waters*, to raiſe up a full *Tide* of Affections in our Souls, We have a *Call* and Invitation then to be more *Free* and *Full* in pouring out our Hearts before the Lord. And at Lower *Ebbs*, we muſt take up with ordinary Offices. No matter how Short is the Cold and Dull Prayer, But that which is Faithful and Fervent can hardly be too Long. *He that ſays nothing as he ought, is long, thô he pronounce but Two ſyllables: But he that ſpeaks to the purpoſe, is not Long, thô he ſpeak Much, and for a Great while together.* (*Philemon*, quoted by *Grotius.*) The Shorteſt Prayer is too Long, that is (*Vox & præterea nihil:*) Nothing but an Empty Sound. But the Longeſt is Short enough, where the

the Mind and Heart hold out to the End, and the *Devotion* is as Long as the Supplication. As when we are Cold, we may get us Heat by *Exercise*, So by *Continuance* in Prayer, we may *Warm* our selves into more Devotion: And from *Fluttering* along the ground, find ourselves carried up at last, as high as *Heaven*. Some are too Nimble in their *Frisking* Prayers, and in too much *Hast* to *Speed*. They come to God's *Door*, But they will not *Stay* and Wait, and so go away without their *Errand*. The *Striving* with our selves in Prayer, to bring our Hearts into better Frame, is our *Wrestling* to Prevail with God. So we *Preach* to our selves in His Hearing, Not to *Inform* Him, but to *Edify* our selves. And when *Repetitions* flow from Heat of affections, we have Scripture instances, that not only *Allow*, but *Approve* them. Tho' when dull and Heartless, resulting from a *Fictitious* Sanctity, or opinion, to be heard the sooner for *Much speaking*, They are but the *Sacrifice of Fools*, which we are forbid to offer: And must not Roll in such Multiplication of Expressions, to *Wire-draw* Devotion, and think to make out in *Length*, what is wanting in *Heat* and *Weight*.

'Tis a good Rule of the Dr. *Let a man Contract his Expressions, where he cannot enlarge his Affection; That he may not hold on speaking, when he has done Praying.* But then where his Affections do Grow upon him in the Use of Words, sure he is not obliged to leave off, because *Solomon* says,

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ſays, *Let thy words be Few*, Eccleſ. 5. 2. Some may think he miſtook his Text, who from hence took occaſion to make an *Encomium* of the Large *Service* of the *Church*, and thoſe Prayers, which he owns to be *near an Hour Long*.

And that is, I think, more than half an Hour Longer than ever I heard any other. The Diſcourſe to ſome, may look like a *Libel* upon our *Liturgy*. And if all *Tautology* were *Battology*, *Common-Prayer* it ſelf then muſt fall under the *Common Condemnation*. Some are weary in the very *Beginning* of their *Prayers*, And others can hold out well even to the Laſt, and find the Fire ſtill more Enflamed, by more *Blowing*. Elſe what ſhould they do, e're the *Firſt* and *Second Service* were at an end? Tho' the *Liturgy* hath Variety, and is (as he calls it) *A String of Pearls*: Yet if the String ſhould be too *Long*, it would ſpoil much of his Reaſoning. And if the frequent *Breaks* and *Pauſes* be the main Commendation, Then who can ſufficiently admire the *Popiſh* Service, and all their multiplied *Collects*, *Reſponds*, *Jeſu's*, *Ave's*, and *Pater Noſter's*? But he ſays, *The people ſo ſhare in the Service, it is almoſt impoſſible, they ſhould be Idle Hearers, or meer Lookers on.* Indeed it's poſſible they may be Neither: *i. e.* if they chance to fall aſleep at the Service: Nor is it quite impoſſible they may be both, and yet *Parrot* over the words, As wanton children and ſome *Merry*

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Griggs, like they were bearing their Part in another kind of Action, and ſhew a very *Comical* ſort of Devotion. Tho' it's true, Their indecent Carriage doth not reflect any real Diſparagement on the *Offices* themſelves, to make them ever the worſe: Which, under the management of true Zealous Worſhippers, do ſhew quite another *Face*: And there ſuch *Interlocution*, and *Alternate* catching the Words of Prayer, helps and Refreſhes each others Devotion, and is like a pious *Conteſt* and ſtruggle between them, which of 'em ſhall be moſt *Earneſt* in the Service of their *Lord*.

But I think he might have left out the [*Always*] when he ſaid, that *Much ſpeaking is the effect of Confidence*: *And Confidence ſprings from the perſuaſion that a man hath of his own Worth.* For a man may Speak Much, and yet *Diſtruſt* himſelf: Or he may ſpeak in Confidence of a *Better Worth* than his *Own*. Yea there may be more Impudence in a Few words than in Many; according as they are. Our *Grand Exemplar* Continued *All Night* in Prayer: And tho' he were ſo much more *Able* to manage it, than we, Yet from the drift of the *Doctor*'s reaſonings, It muſt be *Impertinent to uſe ſo many words with God, in a Long-winded Harangue.*

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I confeſs the *Long Grace* looks not Seaſonable, when a man is *ready to Starve*: And at a ſudden Pinch or danger, *Lord Save me*, is a good Prayer. But when he has more Time, ſure it

is

is not his Fault to Pray Longer. The *Lord's Prayer*, it's true, is ſhort: But are we Confined juſt to thoſe very words? Then why doth the *Church* ſo much enlarge in other? And the thing that is done, and may Lawfully be done, why ſhould any *Son of the Church* argue ſo much againſt it? What Inconveniences ſoever may attend Long Prayers, I cannot think it Convenient to go and prove or inſinuate, That it is *Silly* or *Wicked* ever to uſe them.

To ſay, *That the whole heart and ſoul may be wrapt up in three or four words*, And to tell the Succeſs of an *Ejaculation, that Cleans'd the Leper, Enlightned the Blind, Juſtified the Publican*: And then add, *I never yet heard or read of any Long Prayer that did ſo much*; is a Reflection that I would forbear, if but for the Credit of that *Church* whereof I am a Member, which preſcribes *Longer* Prayers, than ever I us'd of my own, or ever heard any one elſe uſe. So that there are ſome beſides *Heathens* and *Phanaticks*, in this Horrid Guilt of *Long Praying*. And to make the *Long Robes* and *Long Prayers*, *A Cover for all*, and affirm, *That they who are like the Phariſees for Long Prayers, are like them for ſomewhat elſe*, does but give the Brethren in *Querpo* an occaſion for Retort and Drollery upon ſome very *Canonical* men.

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According to his fine Argumentation, If a short Petition be a *Panegyrick* on the Great man's parts, to whom 'tis offered, Then the Shortest Prayer that can be made does the greatest *Honor* to God; and if it should be any longer, it would but *Dishonor* him. Nay if *A Word to the Wise*, then *Half* a Word to the *Only Wise God*, might be enough: Yea, for matter of *Informing* him, None at all. But indeed our Words are neither to *Inform*, nor to *Persuade*, nor to *Weary* and *Overcome* him. Tho' the *Dr.* says, *They must of Necessity be to one of these three purposes.* Yet himself, soon after, finds another Use for them, when he surprizingly tells us, *That the proper use of Words, whenever we speak to God in Prayer, is thereby to pay him Honour and Obedience.* It seems then that they *Honour* and *Dishonour* him. But he hath not told us, just how Many words will Honour, and how Many will Dishonour Him. He speaks of *Praying near an Hour together*, And yet doth not complain of that for *Dishonouring God*, but rather commends it for *Rational Devotion.* So that now, It is not the Heap and *Number*, but the Kind and *Manner* of the Words, that is *Offensive.* Which Indeed I think comes neareſt the truth. And if there be yet another Use of words, (besides Informing, Persuading, and Wearying of God,) which he acquaints us with,

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(pag.

(*pag.* 189.) viz. *To acknowledge and own those Wants before him, that we Supplicate for a Relief of*: He might have done well to tell us, Why that *Acknowledgment* must needs still be made in *Few words*. For I take not that for any Reason which he alledges, *That God has no where commanded us to Call upon him with Multiplicity and Prolixity of words*: Because I neither find, that he has commanded us to call upon him only with *Brevity* and *Paucity* of words. For that all *Long Prayers* are not forbidden, even in *Eccles.* 5. 2 The *Dr.* himself seems agreed with other Expositors, when he praises the Churches Praying for *Near an hour together*. Which he knows cannot be performed without Abundance of *Words*; Nor are the Words of our *Common-Prayer* ever the Fewer, notwithstanding all the *Fractions* and *Amen's*, how Numerous soever. And tho' we must avoid the *Needless Multiplication* of words, Yet we are bid, *Continue in Prayer*. Col. 4. 2. And instead of *Opening the Scriptures*, we should only set Texts *together by the Ears*, If all were of the same Fierce *Pugnacious* Spirit, as some of the *Polemical* Champions. *Pag.* 188.

But it is too obvious to see, How men of most Persuasions, can make *Sins* and *Duties* of such things as God did never make so. Tho' the Scripture Charge is, *To stand fast in the Liberty, wherewith Christ hath made us Free*. Gal. 5. 1. And, for any reasons that ever I saw to the contrary, All men have the Freedom to *Shorten* or *Lengthen*

their Prayers, as themselves do find most conducing to promote the purposes of Piety and Devotion. And I cannot think that any Good man doth Wickedly, in taking his Liberty, to use a *Short* or a *Long* Prayer: When his Design is *Pious* in both: And he is for serving God after the Best manner that he Understands. If some like not his *Way*, Others may as much mislike *Theirs*. And it is not so much matter, what Judgment we pass upon one another, as how we are all concerned to Approve our selves unto Him that *Searcheth our hearts*.

For my share, I am only for defending the *Christian Liberty*, in this, as in the other Points. And I need not much plead for that, which I do seldom or never Use of my own Production. For I do not find that I am able for such *Long Prayers*: And I dare not be *Tedious*, for fear of making the Worse work of it. Nor do I think that I am bound to *Task* my self above my strength, and go Halting in *Chains* of my own making: Nor will I be so enslaved to any ones Expectations, as to engage in more duty than I can well deal with. But for all this, at such times when ever I find my self disposed, and *Sufficient* for Longer attendance upon the Lord, I am resolved, No *Doctors* opinion shall Hinder me from it. Tho' he says, That *No man begins, and ends a Journey, with the same Pace.* Yet I know not what *Some* men can do. And when I find, That in the *Progress* of my Prayer, I can do as well

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well as in the *Beginning*: And that I am not *Tired*, but rather Refreſht with this *Journey*, Perceiving new ſtrength, and more Encouragements, as I proceed: I do not think I am bound to leave off, aſſoon as another may *Judge fit*. Tho' if my Spirits were ſpent, and my Activity *flagg'd*, I ſhould count it beſt to have done, and not force things, with further Attempts upon that, which I did but ſpoil in the doing. However, if the thing at all has been, or ever may be, of good Service, I cannot reckon the *Abuſe* any Argument againſt the *Uſe*. For at that rate, *Long Gowns* as well as *Long Prayers*, muſt be turn'd out of the *Church*; Becauſe both of them have been ſhamefully *Abuſed*.

But let no Tender Chriſtian be terrified, with any ones *Dogmatical* Sayings, To think it a Sin, ſometimes to cut his Prayers *Shorter*, and ſometimes, (as occaſion ſerves,) to draw them out *Longer*: When there is no *Divine* Preſcription to determine, juſt how Long, or how ſhort they ſhall be. But that is left to our ſelves, As Diſcretion, grounded on our own Experience, ſhall direct. Provided we *Impoſe* not upon others, to give any juſt offence, and make the Service Contemptible or Nauſeous, We have a *Latitude*, to Abbreviate, or Extend our Prayers, as we think Convenient. And according to the *Frame* that we are in, and the *Aſſiſtance* that God is pleaſed to Afford, We may Pray a *Little while*, and yet do very well: Or we may Pray a *Great While*, and yet do as well, or Better. *Aſſuming* men may Pre-

ſcribe or Limit, after their own *Humour*: But I know not where *God* hath ſaid, as to our Prayers, *Hitherto ſhall ye go, and no further.*

SECT. IV.

The Liberty of uſing Plain *words or* Elegant.

I take the Stile of *Scripture*, to be the beſt Stile for *Prayer*. For who can ſpeak better, than the *Spirit that Helpeth our Infirmities*? And what more Acceptable *Words*, wherewithal to go unto God, than thoſe of his own *Spirit's* Inditing? And if the Sacred Writers ſpake as they were *Moved by the Holy Ghoſt*; It ſeems then that He who is called *The Spirit of Supplications*, hath alſo put *Words* into our Mouths; and we are to take them, as in the *Bible* we find them. Seeing our Praying to God, is but Pleading with him the Promiſes of his own *Word*, And begging *Strength* to perform the Duties there taught and enjoin'd. Tho' a certain *Dr.* Girds at this way of Praying, Becauſe ſome have been uſed to *Gird at the Government, in Scripture Phraſe*: I could tell him of ſome that can *Gird* as much at the *Government* now, *in other Phraſe*. But ſeeing it is not certain, That the *Holy Ghoſt* did Dictate all the very *Words*, as well as Reveal the *Matter* of the Holy Scripture, I cannot think that we are tied juſt to the *Words* there found:

Reg. 159.

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But may ſpeak in thoſe *Phraſes*, or take Liberty ſometimes to *Vary*, as Prudence ſhall ſuggeſt. And when we Expreſs our own ſenſe, in our own Words, The more *Eaſy* and Natural they are, they ſeem the more proper for *Prayer*. Becauſe it is the *Childrens* ſpeaking to their *Father*, Who is not ſo much moved with their Wit and ſtarch'd *Oratory*, as with their Wants, and earneſt *Cries* for Help. 'Tis not Artificial *Cant*, but *Pathetick* Speaking, which comes warm from the *Heart*, that is likely to be moſt Prevailing; Eſpecially with our *Heavenly Father*, Who is not to be wrought upon with *Rhetorick*, or any arts of Perſuaſion, But calls for the Heart, which is an Inſtrument that makes the beſt Muſick, in his Ears, when it is *Broken*. And *Fineries* of Language look not ſo Agreeable for *Mourners*, and the *Beggars* which we perſonate in our Prayers. The plaineſt *Garb*, that is Decent, beſt fits the *Former*, And to the *Latter* we are inclinable to give, rather when they appear in *Rags*, than in *Ribbons*. Jingles and Quibbles are fitter to be us'd in Playing, than in Praying. And it gives ſuſpition, that we rather *Play* with our Prayers, than pour them out from a heart Senſible of our Wants and Diſtreſſes, When we can be ſo *Gay* and *Flouriſhing*, and vary phraſes to ſet off our Abilities; The uſe of our Words in Prayer, being rather to *Affect* our ſelves, than to *Move* the Lord, No matter therefore how Plain they be, ſo they be Pertinent, and not Looſe and indecent. For we are not ſo much

Affected

Affected with words that are Trim or Hard, as with those that are *Significative* and Hearty. He that knows the *Poverty* of our case, will not reject us, for appearing before him in a Plain homely Dress, Nor *Despise the Prayers of the Humble*, because they are of a course Thread, and not set off with *Laces* and *Fringes*. We may speak our Minds *Down-right to God*, even as we would to our dearest Friend: And not fear a *Repulse*, because our words want a *Flourish*. He speaks Elegantly enough, that speaks but *Intelligibly* and *Affectionately*. And when I *Feel* what I say, and Say that which makes others *Understand* and *Sympathize* with me, That is the *Happiness of Expression*, which best answers the Ends of Speech.

But if we think any thing Better than this, we *May* use it: Nay we *should*, Because God is Worthy to be Served with the *Best*. He that cheifly *requires Truth in the Inward parts*, will also be Honoured with the *Mouth*; And did not give man Eloquence for any thing so much, as *to shew forth his Praise*. 'Tis too Morose, to exclude all Flowers of Language from the *Pulpit* and *Prayer*, because of St. *Paul's Demonstration of the Spirit*, opposed to the *Enticing words of man's Wisdom*. *The Deceiver is cursed, that hath in his Flock a Male, and Vows and Sacrifices to the Lord a Corrupt thing*. Mal. 1. 23.

Heart

Heart and *Head* too muſt be at his Service: And the *Beſt member we have* muſt do it's Beſt for him that gave it. That which is called our *Glory*, muſt be imployed to his *Glory*. And when we ſpeak not in a *Bombaſtick* Affectation, or Tawdry *Phraſeology*, but in a becoming *Politeneſs*, and Awful *Grandiloquence*, ſuch as ſpeaks us Mindful of the *Infinite Majeſty* we are before: When the Tongue and Mind are turn'd to an *Uniſon*, and there is *Melody in the Heart*, as well as *Quainteneſs* in the Mouth, Pleaſing to God is that *Eloquence*.

Such as have even a Natural *Facility* and *Felicity* of ingeniouſly Expreſſing themſelves, need not fear it will create any Prejudice againſt their Prayers, to ſpeak as *Handſomly* to *God*, as they do to *Men*. Nor think that *Homelineſs* muſt be Peculiar to his Service. But rather Dread to pour out *Crude* indigeſted ſtuff, to provoke a Nauſeous *Qualm*, and make the *Offering of the Lord to be Abhorred*. And ſuch as are fain to *Study* for it, before they can attain to the *Better* way of Expreſſion, yet need not fear, that the *Artificial*, will profane the *Spiritual* part, of their Devotion: But may rather take ſatisfaction in this, That they do not *Serve the Lord their God with that which Coſts them Nothing*.

The

The *Dr.* ſays well, That *where God hath given Learning and Utterance, He will not endure Men ſhould be Accurate in their Diſcourſe, and Looſe in their Devotions: To put off the Author of every good and perfect Gift, with Ramble and confuſed Talk, Babble and Tautology: Nothing under the beſt a man can offer, being fit to preſent to God.* Yet I doubt not but the man ſhall be *Accepted according to what he hath*, who ſtrives to be as *Accurate* here, as he is any where elſe. Thô he cannot expreſs himſelf at the Rhetorical rate of ſome *Wits*. True indeed, It is not the *Simplicity of the Head, but of the Heart.* Yet God knows the moſt learned *Doctor's* beſt weighed words to be but Weak and courſe before Heaven. And the plaineſt Speech of any ordinary man, that is *Sincere* and *Devout*, ſounds as well with him, as the moſt Florid *Harangue* of the greateſt Maſter of Language.

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Pag. 142.

The

SECT. V.

The Liberty of uſing this Poſture *or that.*

THO' *Bodily Exerciſe profitteth little*, yet as much as the Body is capable of doing, it can no where Better perform, than in his Service who *Framed* it. We are commanded to *Glorify him with our Souls and Bodies both.* And ſome Bodily *Diſtance*, helps to bring our Souls *Nearer* to God. The Body is the Servant of a Servant, And it is fit my *Servant* ſhould ſerve me, in the Serving of my *Lord.* He that hath given us Knees and Bodies to *Bow down*, and Hands and Eyes to *Lift up*, inſtructs us by our very *Frame*, as well as by his *Word*, how we ſhould carry in his *Worſhip.* The call to Worſhip, is alſo to *Fall down and Kneel before the Lord our Maker.* Pſal. 95. 6. And (προσκυνεῖν) it is to *Crouch* even as a *Spaniel* before his Maſter. We cannot ſhew the Inner-man, but by the Outer, which is to tell how things ſtand *Within*, and by proper Words and Tone, and Geſture and Actions, to profeſs the *Profound Admiration* we have in our minds, of the glorious Excellencies and infinite Perfections of God. Men that cannot ſee our *Hearts*, yet take notice of our *Carriage.* And we muſt dread to *Scandalize* thoſe whom we ought to *Edify.* A little matter here, may give great Offence. And we muſt not only

Look

Look to our own Hearts, but take heed we do not *ſtumble* others. Thô we muſt be ſo intent upon the Preſence of *God*, as little to regard who elſe is *preſent* with us at our Prayers, and not let any *Company* Awe or Divert, or Interrupt us, in the *Homage* we are paying to Him who is infinitely *Higher* and *Greater* and *Better* than all; who, compar'd with Him, are no more than mere *Vanity* and *Nothing*. In *Company* we are to Pray, as if there were none but *God* there; and in *Solitude*, as if the Eyes of all the *World*, as well as His, were upon us. For he indeed is *All*, and to Him all Perſons and things elſe are as if they *were not* at all.

Yet it is not under pretence of *Spirituality*, to Slight thoſe external *Signs* of Reverence, which are ſo mighty *Influential*, to raiſe our own Affections, and to Enflame the Zeal of others. Thô we have that Spirit of *Adoption*, whereby we cry *Abba Father:* Yet even the Child of a *King* may go *Rudely* into his Father's preſence. And *Stately to ſet us down* in the Preſence of God, as if the glorious *Majeſty* ſo infinitely Above us were to be *Bearded* in a ſawcy manner, ſhews us to be children of ſuch *Manners* as need to be better *Taught:* as if we thought it a *Leſſening* of our ſelves, to uſe the humbleſt *Proſtrations* before Him, at whoſe Feet all the Worthies of Heaven *Caſt their Crowns*, Rev. 4. 10. and whom indeed we can never *Honour*, ſo much as his ſervice *Honours* us. Let us Conſider then, With whom it is, that we

we make so *Bold*, and not forget the *Infinite Disproportion* between us and Him that *Made* us: Nor carry as if we were too *Goodly* to be seen *Cringing* low at his Footstool, or as if we meant it only for a Complement, when we call our selves his *Humble servants*.

It is Mockery indeed to Bow the Body at his *Name*, when the Heart never Bends to his *Gospel*. Like those that Bowed the Knee, and cried, *Hail Jesus*, to the Lord of Glory, whom they *Crucified*. Nor is it a *Puppet-Religion* without Life, that I contend for: To make our selves such *Anticks* as the *Popish* Worshippers, who had need be *Masters of the Ceremonies*, to hit of that Worship, more like a *Ball* or *Interlude*, than the grave Worship in *Spirit*. And their Religion, as Ritual as *Judaism*, clogg'd with Rites as numerous, and more Obscure and useless, yea even all Outside and *Pageantry*, and as unlike the *Gospel-Simplicity*, as dumb Shews and idle Formalities can make it, such a *Rote* of words and *Histrionick* gestures, and Superstitious *Fopperies*, which any silly Children, or the vilest of the people can be as nimble at as the best, and contend more for the Modish forms, than for the Faith *Once delivered to the Saints*: These doings may soon give any *Spiritual Worshipper* Enough of *Popery*, and utterly turn his Heart against that which is so opposite to the design and *Genius* of the Gospel. Tho so many can wonder at the outward *Pomp*, without the inward *Life*, and cry *The Temple of the Lord*,

Lord, when they mind no Fellowſhip with the *Lord of the Temple*: I cannot think it ſuch a mighty Accompliſhment, for men to enter thoſe Geers and obſerve all their poſtures in the *Ritual* Religion, and ſhew all their *Metal* for the things leaſt *Required* at their hands

But yet outward *Significations* of Reverence in Worſhip are not ſuch matters of *Indifference*, as we need not take any *Care* of. For who that has the *Fear of God* in his Heart, can make ſo Bold with the *Majeſty of Heaven*, as if the great God were *Altogether ſuch a one as himſelf?* To preſent that to the *Biggeſt* and *Beſt* of Beings, Perfect above thought, and Bleſſed beyond addition, which he would be aſhamed to offer even to his poor *Fellow-creature*, an earthly Governor? To be ſtiff and Haughty, or Whifling and wanton before the *Throne of God*, To Loll or Yawn over the *Divine Worſhip*, To ſit in State, as thoſe that were Above it, Or to Prate and Laugh, to Gaze about, or be doing ſome Silly actions, as thoſe that came only to *Slight* and *Affront* it: How fulſome ſoever it be to ſee the *Looſe Liver* a compleat *Formaliſt*, Yet who can think well of ſuch a rude *Slovenly* Religion, as does not compoſe men into a more awful Devout *Behaviour*, in their ſolemn Addreſſes to the *Moſt High God*, whom we ſhould never approach but with all Humility, and a becoming *Reverence and godly Fear*, and even *Annihilate* our ſelves before him?

But

But then for the *Manner* of expreſſing this Reverence, In our *Secret* Prayers we are left at *Liberty*, to uſe that Geſture which we find moſt to Quicken us, and promote the *Duty*. And in *Publick*, our Behaviour muſt Conform to the uſage of the *Church*, with which we have *Communion*. And with *Company* elſewhere, our care muſt be, ſo to carry our ſelves, as to *Expreſs* our own Devotion, and not to Damp, but *Excite* the ſame in others.

Holy Scripture doth not Limit us to one certain *Poſture* of *Prayer*. Thô the moſt uſual, and beſt approved among all be *Kneeling*. Our great Redeemer himſelf, *Kneeled down and Prayed*. *Luk.* 22. 41. And that for certain, is the beſt *Pattern* we can follow. If our Bleſſed *Lord* ſo *Humbled himſelf*, the Greateſt man muſt not think much to come down ſo Low.

Kneeling ne're ſpoil'd Silk Stocking. Herb.

If it hurt the *Finery*, it will make him finer another way. But yet it is not Sinful ſometimes, upon occaſion, to uſe another *Geſture*. Not only *Proſtration* or Lying along, as *Numb.* 11. 25. Or *Standing*, as *Mar.* 11. 25. (and *Luk.* 18. 11. Even the humble *Publican*, who would not ſo much as *Lift up his eyes to Heaven*, we find in this Poſture.) But even *Sitting*, as 2 Sam. 7. 18. *King David ſate before the Lord*, and Prayed; (as there to the chapters end.) So it is according to our *Tranſlation*;

(Thô ſome think it denotes rather his *Abode*, than his *Poſture*, in Prayer, with whom I liſt not to contend). But again it is ſaid, 1 *Kings* 19. 4. *Elijah Sate down under a Juniper tree, and Prayed.* The *Impotent* man then, that is confined to his *Bed* or *Chair*, muſt not think it will Spoil or hinder his Prayers, Becauſe he doth not uſe his *Knees*. And when we are Walking in our Chamber, or on the Way, When Riding or Sitting, where we cannot *Retire*, and at the ſame Inſtant find an Occaſion and Motion, to *Lift up our Hearts to God*, We muſt not withhold *Prayer*, becauſe we want a Conveniency for *Kneeling*. But let the Office (rather than Fail,) be done, for that time, in the *Poſture* as we are: And God will hear the Deſire of the *Humble heart*, thô the Body be not *Incurvate* in the uſual Figure. When I am *By my ſelf*, I will not ſcruple to Pray *Standing*, or *Walking*, or *Lying*, if I find the work go forward in ſuch ways, as well as by *Kneeling*. Prayers are not ſo confined to the *Knees*, but that as I may *Kneel*, and not *Pray*, So I may Pray and not *Kneel*. *Genuflection* I account, indeed the *Beſt*, but not the *Only* Poſture of Prayer.

SECT.

SECT. VI.

The Liberty of uſing a Form *or none.*

THE *Contending Parties* in both Extreams I think to be *Miſtaken*: Such as will allow of no *Forms* of Prayer at all, And ſuch as plead for Forms *Alone*, and will not Endure any other way of Praying. They that are againſt Forms, *as ſuch*, muſt reject the Prayer of the Lord himſelf, *That Breviary of the Goſpel*, as *Tertullian* calls it. A Prayer ſo *Comprehenſive* and Copious, as well as *Compendious*, that thô we may Enlarge upon it, we cannot ask *More* than is included in it. A *Prayer* which few *Sects* of Chriſtians have been ſo wild, as to leave out of their *Offices*. Tho we are not bound *Always* to uſe it, yet ſtill to Pray after the *Manner* as it preſcribes, *Mat.* 6. 9. And who can we think ſo fit to inſtruct us, How *God* ſhould be Prayed to, and *Man* prayed for, as he who was Himſelf both *God and Man?* I am never more Eaſy and free from a troubleſome Concern about the Words of Prayer, than when I am making uſe of the *Lord's-Prayer*. And they that find fault with it, as it is a *Form*, may for the ſame reaſon quarrel all the Scriptures, for being a *Form of Sound words*. Nay they may as well reject every *Conceived* Prayer, which is indeed as much a Form to the *Hearers*, as if it had been penn'd or printed, and then Repeated.

ed. Yea I may know *That* to be a real *Form*, compoſed by my ſelf, which ſome others take for an *Extempore Effuſion*. And ſo it may be only *Ignorance* in them, which makes it Acceptable with them, Becauſe they take it not to be *Prepared* by me, but to flow immediately from the *Spirit* in me But to think that all *Set Forms* are oppoſed to Prayer by the *Spirit*, is ſuch an opinion of *Praying by the Spirit*, as I cannot comprehend. No Praying indeed is true and right, that is not *Supplication in the Spirit*, i. e. Through the Help of the Spirit of God. But I ſee not why it may not be *ſuch*, as well with, as without a *Form*. Nor is the Spirit *Limited* by ſuch Forms, Whenas indeed the *Enlargement* of the Heart ſtands not ſo much in the Copiouſneſs and variety of *Expreſſions*, as in the extent and Elevation of the *Affections*. A Carnal man may have a *Fluency* of good Words, But only the Child of God abounds with holy and heavenly *Deſires*. And thoſe deſires I may expreſs in Others words, or in my own: *Premeditated*, or *Immediately* formed: without *Stinting* of the *Spirit* either way. The one may do as well as the other: No matter which I take, So that I do it pertinently, and affectionately. For Words are but the *Carkaſs* of Prayer, The Soul and Spirit lies *within*. And the *Searcher of hearts* regards not ſo much, how it is *Dreſt*, as from what *Heart* it proceeds, and how Earneſt and Devout it is. My words are not to Move Him, but my ſelf: Not to pull the *Bank* to me,

but

but to bring my *Veſſel* to the Shore. And ſo I may uſe ſuch words, as I find fitteſt to Enflame my affections, that I may ſtand rightly diſpoſed to receive his Mercies. Whether I pray in a *Book*, or without, is the ſmalleſt matter to Him: So that I Pray at all *indeed*, And when I uſe the Book, am not *Lazy* and *Formal*, And when I uſe none, am not *Rude* and *Proud*, but ſtill *Humble* and *Hearty*. To *Pray*, is a great deal more than *Saying* of Prayers. There may be all the *Words*, without any thing of the *Spirit* of Prayer. Whether I ſpeak out of the *Book*, or out of my *Memory*, I may draw nigh to God only with my *Lips:* Or I may ſo manage my Prayer, as to have it *Sincere* and *Effectual*, either way.

But when ſo little is done by the moſt at Prayer, and ſuch multitudes do live *Prayerleſs*, not Calling upon the Lord at all, Little need to perplex the thing, or *Affright* any from the *Throne of Grace*, Becauſe they deliver not their minds juſt in our *Rote* of words. To diſgrace *Book Prayers*, may be the way to diſcourage the moſt from all Prayer. If they muſt have no *Forms*, they could (it may be) make nothing of it; but *Ramble* and *Babble*, Truſting only to their own *Abilities*. I think we ought rather to *Hearten* men on, if they *Own God* in any way of ſerious Worſhip, with Book, or without. For 'tis *according to what a man hath*, that God *Acceptet h* him. And he ſtands not ſo much upon a poor Chriſtian's *Wording* of his Prayers,

When he ſees his *Spirit* Engaged, and that he offers the *Beſt* he has, doing all Heartily, *as in the Sight of God.* We make a mighty matter, as to the way of ſome mens *Wording* things, ſo much Better than others. But alas, what a ſmall thing is this in the Eſteem of *God?* who Valueth and Judgeth men by ſomewhat elſe. The moſt Elaborate and exact Expreſſions, What wretched *Barbariſms* and hideous *Jargon* would they be found, if ſeverely *Criticiz'd* upon by *Infinite Perfection?* And wo be to the beſt *Speaker* in the World, if he ſhould not be Heard and Accepted, on any other account, but only for the ſake of his *Words.* For how can a mouth-full of frail *Breath* (tho *Modulated* with never ſuch Art and Advantage) be the *Motive* of all God's Mercy, and Man's Salvation?

As much *Streſs* as ever ſome are pleas'd to lay upon it, 'Twill not be ſo much enquir'd after in the great Day of Accounts, How we uſed to *Expreſs* ourſelves in our Prayers: As how our Hearts ſtood *Affected* to the Service. And then the *Holy Livers* ſhall be found aforehand with the *Fineſt Speakers.* And ſuch weakneſs and Indecence as many a man would not *Pardon*, The *Father of Mercies* will never Mention to them that Follow him, and Delight in him, as *dear Children.*

He equally offends God, and *Prophanes* Prayer, who either reads it *Careleſly* in a Book, or tumbles it *Rudely* out of his Breaſt. But when

when I find that I can be *Devout* in the uſe of a *Prayer-Book*, and that I can Exerciſe as much *Devotion*, when I have *no Book*, that I can join Profitably and Comfortably with the *Church-Prayers*, and with *other Prayers:* I am (*in utrumq; paratus*) without Scruple for all Prayer, that is offered with Humility and Zeal to God, thrô *Jeſus Chriſt*, for ſuch things, as in his comprehenſive *Platform*, he has directed and encouraged us to pray for.

I will never believe, That an *Earthly Father* can be Kinder than my *Heavenly*. And if my natural *Parent* will take it in good part from me, when I deliver my ſelf to him, *as well as I can*, (Thô I do not make a *Starched Speech*, or read all out of a *Book*,) can he that *knows our Frame*, and hath *Compaſſion on our Infirmities*, (*Pitying them that fear Him, as a Father pities his children*,) fall out with me, becauſe I have not the *Knack* of Expreſſing my ſelf, as well as another? When he knows I have a *Careful Heart* to Pleaſe him, and am for ſerving him with the *Beſt*, and do not uſe my own words, for the high *Opinion* that I have of them, above others, But becauſe another cannot expreſs my wants and deſires, ſo *Agreeably* as I can my ſelf. Who beſt knows where it pinches moſt, and what I would be moſt glad to have, And becauſe I am afraid of being a *Slothful Servant*, to Bury any *Talent* in a *Napkin*, that my Lord hath lent me. I would ſerve him with my Underſtanding and Memory, and Utterance, and all my faculties, as well as with my Affections: And if my Underſtand-

ing cannot *vye* with ſome others, or their Words be Better than mine, Yet I think I am bound alſo to uſe my *Own*, and to do according to the *Ability that God hath given me*: Who, I am ſure, will not be *Harſh* and *Stern* with the Weakeſt of his Children, that ſhew their *Willingneſs* and *Endeavours* to pleaſe him, thô they cannot do like ſome of the reſt.

I my ſelf feel more Inclination, as I ſee more Reaſon, ſometimes to give to a Beggar that is a ſorry *Faultering Orator*, than to another that ſpeaks Exactly, in *Mood and Figure*. 'Tis not ſo much his *Fine Words* and Cadence as his Want and Miſery, join'd with Simplicity and Humility, that makes him an *Object of Charity*. And I know, it is not ſo much for our *Speech* and the Words of Prayer, as for our Hearts, and the *Spirit of Prayer*, that He regards us, who will be worſhipped with our *Souls* and *Spirits*.

We ſhould indeed *Chuſe* words to Reaſon with him: But when we compoſe ſomwhat of our *Own*, it ſpeaks our greater *Care* to be Acceptable. And Biſhop *Hall* (in his *Devout Soul*) tells us, *That a Stammering Suppliant may reach to a more eminent Devotion, than he that can deliver himſelf in the moſt fluent and Pathetical forms of Elocution.* 'Tis not to rake together a parcel of good Petitions, and ſeek to give them ſome Life in the Utterance: unleſs we *Draw Nigh with a True heart in full Aſſurance of Faith.* For it it is Faith in God's *Promiſes*, that is the Foun-

Pag. 11.

dation

dation of all our *Prayers.* And Prayer is but *Faith* putting forth itſelf in a *Flame* of Deſires. God hears no impenitent Sinners, that *Regard Iniquity in their hearts,* Let their words be never ſo fine and *Appoſite.* And he rejects no *Humble, Faithful Supplicant,* be his Speech never ſo weak and *Imperfect.* Tho ſuch be not *Eloquent,* they have words ſufficient to do their *Buſineſs.* Even *Broken words* will ſerve the turn, when they come from a *Broken heart.*

When going to Prayer then, I will remember I am going to my *Father.* And tho I know a *Son honours his Father,* and ſo I will know my Diſtance, and pay a profound *Veneration,* and Exert the beſt of my *Abilities* in his Service: Yet while I keep off from the *Uncreaturely Boldneſs,* I will not run upon the *Unchildlike Strangeneſs,* To be curb'd with ſuch a *Spirit of Bondage,* that I dare not *Speak* for my ſelf: Nor dejected with a Servile Dread of his lying at catch, to *Trepan* me in my words, if I do not place every one Aright. As if he were ſo Inconſiderate of my Frailty, or could carry like ſo *Rigid* an Enemy, to Caſt off me, and all my Suit, if there be but the leaſt word knockt out of *Joint.* At this rate, (did I liſten to the Teachers of ſuch a *Ghaſtly* Frightful Religion,) I ſhould make it a more Dangerous thing to *Pray to God,* than to *Keep away,* and never come before Him. But I will never be perſuaded, that the *Father of Mercies* has the Spirit of ſome *Rough* and *Sowre Doctors*: Who yet can make

as

as bold with God in their *Manners*, as they think others do in their *Prayers*: And are not so Strict in *Tutoring* their Neighbours Tongues, but they can be as *Lax* in ordering their Own.

I cannot question in the least, But there have been many and gross *Abuses* of this *Way* of Praying; which, if rak'd together, may furnish out matter enough for *Satyr*, and make abundance of work for any *Doctor*, or other, that has such a *Talent*. And tho Stories seldom lose in the reporting, by such as are known to have a strong *Byas*, Yet let *Commin*'s Hypocrisy, and *Weyer*'s Villany both pass without Contradiction, That the one could so *Masquerade* it for the *Pope*, and the other *Command* good words, while himself was Commanded by the *Evil Spirit*: And to these *Two* let Twenty more be added of the same *Stuffing*: 'Twill but prove, what none denies, That there have been Ill men of all *Pretentions*. *Satan himself can be Transformed into an Angel of Light*. And one that was a *Devil* had yet a Name among the Disciples of *Christ*. But let *False Coin* and *Counterfeit Wares* be Detected and Cry'd down: This is no Prejudice at all to that which is *Current*, *right*, and *good*. Nor does my Undertaking oblige me to answer for all the Cant, and Gibberish, Jargon and Impertinence, flowing from any shatter'd Heads, or wild Tongues, under pretence of *Exercising* their *Gifts*. Men may Hurt themselves, even with *God's Gifts*, and turn their very Remedy to their Ruin. They may be proud of their

New

New Words, as of New Cloaths. And there may be much more *Pride* than *Devotion* in the caſe, When we are aſhamed to Appear before the *Lord*, unleſs it be ſtill in a *New Dreſs*. But if the Abuſes muſt lay an *Embargo* on the Uſe, I know not what *Prayers* then of any ſort will be left us: Or what will become of the *Common Prayer* it ſelf, but it muſt ceaſe to be *Common*, or to be at all; becauſe many have made as Wretched work with *that*, as ever was made of *Free Prayer*.

But I know ſome would heavily reſent it for a moſt *Tyrannical* Impoſition, To be tied up for ever medling with a *Bottle of Wine*, becauſe it has Happened with ſo many, That when the *Wine* was in, the *Wit* was out. This *Doctor* is not therefore for Renouncing the Doctrine of the *Trinity*, becauſe he takes that for an *Adulteration*, which another Doctor calls a *Vindication* of it. *Holy* things and *Pearls* will ſometimes light among *Dogs* and *Swine*. But yet they do not for that, loſe their *Nature*. The Things themſelves are not a jot the Worſe, tho the *Profaners* of them are a great deal. Let thoſe that are *Guilty* anſwer for that. But why ſhould the *Children of the Kingdom* be turn'd out of their *Privilege*, for the ſake of ſome illegitimate *Interlopers*, that have made *Invaſions* upon it? Whither ſhould a *Child* go but to his *Father*? And if he muſt not ſpeak a Word to him, but what he *Reads* out of a Form, Where's the *Ingenuity* and *Freedom* of a Child? and the

Bold-

Boldneſs at the Throne of Grace? And what advantage then of the *Spirit of Adoption*, above the *Spirit of Bondage?* Sure we may have *Boldneſs* and *Aſſurance*, without being *Sawcy* and *Malapert*. And tho it is not for a pitiful *Worm* to think of being *Hail-Fellow* with his *Glorious Maker*: Yet I think it is an untowardly way of *Honouring* my Father, to take him for ſuch a one, that I *Dare* not *Speak* with him; or if but a word *Amiſs*, to think he would not *Hear*, nor *Forgive* me.

Deſires are the *Wings* of the Soul, on which it mounts up to Heaven; *Prayer* ſets them a working: But where are many *Appendages*, they'll be like but to *Cumber* and Clog the Motion, which the more *Natural*, the more Free and Eaſy. Tho a *dexterous* Art may help Nature, Yet *Grace* added to both, is the beſt accompliſhment, and the *Crown* of all. Prayer is *God's Breath in man.* Herb. Nothing to be done in this matter, without the *Spirit Helping our Infirmities.* And that I take to be what they call *Praying by the Spirit*, (whether with Book or without,) when the good Spirit of God gives his gracious *Guidance* and *Aſſiſtance*, for the true and zealous performance, tho not an immediate *Inſpiration*, to Dictate our Prayers. Therefore with all our Prayers, we muſt ſtill Pray for the *Spirit of Prayer*, that our Prayer may be *Supplication in the Spirit.* And when it is but ſuch, it will have a *Recommendation*, that will help it to find Acceptance, tho it be not ſet out in Perfection of *Stile.* In

In *Private* I am not ſo curious of my Words, but often let my Expreſſions *Follow* my Affections. And I may make a Continued Oration, or Break off and Pauſe, and begin again, as I ſee occaſion.

They that in Private by themſelves alone
Do Pray, may take
What Liberty they pleaſe
In chuſing of the ways
Wherein to make
Their Souls moſt intimate Affections known
To Him that ſees in Secret, when
Th' are moſt conceal'd from other men.
Harv. Po. *p.* 14.

In ſuch Retirements we are out of the reach of any *Momus*, to carp at our *Words*: And free from all Concern, but to have our *Hearts Right with God*, who will not take offence at a Miſplaced or Improper *Word*, When he hath the Heart *Engaged* and Buiſy at work in his Service. He calls *That* to draw nigh to him in the firſt place, let the *Tongue* follow after as it can. And as it's moſt Natural, when our Mouths ſpeak *Out of the Abundance of our Hearts*: So a few words that come *Warm* from the Heart, are more Valuable than Ten thouſand ſaid after another, or in a cuſtomary Round.

Sine Monitore, quia de Pectore Orамus. Tertul. Apol. c. 30. We are not *Told* all that we muſt Say in our *Prayers*, becauſe we fetch

fetch them out of the *Bottom* of our *Hearts*. And he needs no other *Prompter*, be he never so Weak, that has the *Spirit* of God, himself, for his *Tutor*.

But when I am called to be the *Mouth* of the Company, I must be more *Cautelous*: especially if they be *Captious*, and such as are apt to be *Scandalized*, should any thing drop that sounds Unadvis'd. 'Tis good then to *Forecast* What to say, and How, in words pertinent and Becoming. And when the *Heart Indites a good matter, the Tongue will be the Pen of a Ready Writer. Suitable* Expressions are apt to fall in with *Well digested* Meditations.

I confess that which the *Dr.* alledges may be an Inconvenience of the *Extempore* way, When he that Ministers, hath his *Mind taken up to find out Words, it looks more like Studying than Praying. Beating the Brain*, when he should be *Drawing out the Affections*. And I heartily Subscribe to his Rule, *That whatever gives the Soul Scope and Liberty to exercise and imploy the hearts Affection and Devotion, That doth most effectually help and enlarge the Spirit of Prayer*. But together with this, Let it be considered, That some are in more Concern and *Pain*, to be tied up to *Others* Words, than to be at Liberty to express themselves in their *Own*. Especially when it is supposed, They are such as are Acquainted with the *Holy Scripture*, and all the *Heads of Prayer*, and have a *Good Treasure* within them, both of Mat-

Pag. 152.

Matter, and fit Phraſes to dreſs it out. And when (as the Dr. expreſſes it.) *They are not to ſtudy Fineſs, but Decency: Not to Declaim as Orators, but to ſpeak as men.* Pag. 141. Therefore, methinks, they may tell their own Tale as well as they can, and not only *Read a Paper*: Think of the Subſtance and Words too, but not juſt ſay a *Leſſon*. A Judicious man ſure may ſpeak the Senſe of his Soul, and not fraught with *Nonſence and Incoherence, Confuſion and Impertinence*. Nay tho' *A Child of God may be of ſo weak Parts, as to ſhew himſelf Broken and incoherent, when put upon common Diſcourſe*, (ſaith Biſhop *Hopkins* Alm. Chriſt. p. 72.) *Yet engage him in Prayer, How doth he expatiate and enlarge, and what a Torrent of Divine Rhetorick will he pour into the Boſom of God?*

Yea the Dr. tells us, *That where God hath given Ability, he will be ſerved by acts proportionable to it, and that our Parts ought to be employed in the worſhip of God that gave them: Or elſe, not wearing God's Livery in his own Service, we add Sacriledge to Profaneſs, and Strip and Starve our Devotions.* Pag. 143. Now what would he have? We *Muſt* uſe our *Parts*, and we muſt *Not*. Where God hath furniſhed a Readineſs and pertinence of Expreſſion, Yet muſt we not dare to Speak for our ſelves or others? No not a *Word*, but what is juſt ſet down for us on the *Paper*? Tho' I am not accuſtomed to the *Sudden Effuſions*, (not finding in my ſelf a Sufficiency for that Service,)

Yet

Yet I dare not from hence conclude, That God hath given ſuch *Abilities* to none. And where he hath given them, Muſt they be Reſtrained from the Uſe of them, becauſe I cannot do as they? And muſt my *Scantling* be made a Rule to all, and the *Meaſure* which none muſt offer to Exceed?

The Dr. (it ſhould ſeem,) hath had the opportunities which I have not had, to hear the *Pretenders without Ability*, with their *endleſs Repetitions, inſufferable Nonſenſe*, and Prayers full of *Ramble and Inconſequence*, which he counts of an *Opiate* nature, to caſt one Aſleep. The Temptation, I confeſs, was never ſet before me. But if it were, I think it would more try the ſtrength of my *Patience*, than my *Ability in Watching*; For I ſhould be too full of *Indignation* to Sleep. But whatever *Extravagancies* have attended the thing, and tho it be the thing which I dare not pretend to be *Maſter* of my ſelf: Yet for the ſake of many of my *Betters* that have Appeared for it, and been Happy in it, I dare not Decry and run it down, as a *Scandalous* and *Inſufferable* practice: Nor ſo *Limit the Holy One*, as to conclude, He hath given to none, any more Sufficiency for it, than to my ſelf. But ſhall even leave it, as I find it in the *Holy Scripture*, Undecided, and at *Liberty*. And as our *Saviour* ſaid in another caſe, Let them *Receive it, to whom it is given*. But when I ſee no *Jus Divinum* for *Forms*, or *no Forms*, I cannot

P. 217.

cannot but wonder at the *Aſſuming* Humor of thoſe men, that will take ſo much upon them, to *Brand* and *Damn* the one or the other, where the Word of God hath not paſt the *Sentence* on either.

SECT. VII.

The Liberty of uſing One *Form or* Another.

SEeing God hath not put all the very *Words* into my Mouth, Wherewithal I muſt *Appear* before him, I am left to *Chuſe* for my ſelf, and may take words of my own *Contriving* and collecting: Or ſuch *Prepared* and Fitted to my hand, as I find moſt conducing to Miniſter to my *Devotion*. Yet here I deſign not to offer any thing tending to Looſen what *Authority* has Bound: Nor to *Unhinge* the things that are Settled, as to the *Liturgy* and Publick Offices of the Church; Which I know not how any can *Calumniate*, without an ill Reflection on the *Compilers*, who dyed *Martyrs* of our Profeſſed Religion, and approved themſelves the greateſt enemies to the *Popiſh* Superſtition. Tho I dare not *Idolize* any Form, nor make it *Excluſive* of all elſe, as if there were no true Worſhip, but that. I am far from Deſpiſing what the Dr. calls ſuch a *Treaſure of Rational Devotion*. And I believe many have a *Pique* at it, not ſo much for any *Exceptionable* things in it, as for the ſake of ſome *Admired* Perſons, whom they hear Speak againſt it. I

have long ſince teſtified my *Aſſent* and *Conſent*, to all that is therein Appointed: To allow it as True, and to Approve it as Good: Or, as Dr. *Falkner* gives his ſenſe of it, (*Lib. Eccleſ.* p. 96) *That it may Warrantably, and with a good Conſcience be uſed.* And I do ſtill Declare for it, as far as it is *Appointed, i. e.* for the *Publick Service of the Church.* But I cannot think my ſelf obliged to Plead for this *Form*, to the Juſtling out of all other. When as indeed Other Forms alſo are Contrived and put into our hands, even by the *Fathers* of the Church. And Dr. *Patrick*, (now one of our Right Reverend *Biſhops*,) in the Preface of his Book of Devotions for *Families*, thus freely delivers his Opinion, *That the Reverence due to the Common-Prayer will be beſt preſerved, by imploying it only in the Publick Divine Service; (unleſs there's a Prieſt to Officiate in Private.)* And that *the Deſign of it, is not to furniſh people with Prayers for all thoſe particular Occaſions, wherein Devout Souls ſhould make their Requeſts to God.* And he appeals to the conſtant Opinion of pious Divines, *That other Prayers are Neceſſary for the Flock of Chriſt, Beſides the Publick Liturgy.* And I obſerve, that his *Grace*, the late Lord Arch-Biſhop of *Canterbury*, Whoſe Name I cannot mention without ſome mark of Honour. Such a rich *Perfume* his high Deſerts have left behind him. Who was upon conſtant and eminent Service of the *Church*, even all his days: And his moſt *Uſeful* Learning and *Happy* Pen, flowing with *Nervous* Senſe, in the *Eaſieſt*

ſieſt Stile, will *Oblige* the World even as long as it ſtands. In his Sermon of *Family-Religion*, makes no mention of the *Common Prayer* for *Family-Worſhip*: But refers to the *Excellent Helps for this purpoſe, for thoſe that ſtand in Need of them, in the ſeveral Books of Devotion, calculated for the Private uſe of Families, as well as for Secret Prayer in our Cloſets.* Thô I Criminate none, who diſcreetly collect out of the *Liturgy*, to uſe in their Houſes, but commend all the Families, where this or any other Offices of God's true Worſhip, are Reverently and Seriouſly performed: That I may not be guilty of the *Impoſing* Humour, which I cenſure. (*Hanc Veniam damus, petimuſq; viciſſim.*) Let every one enjoy the Freedom, which the great Lord of all hath *Allowed* them.

Tho' God that required Sacrifices without *Blemiſhes*, would have thoſe of our Prayers as free from *Mutilation* and Defect, as our Frailty will admit, Yet I do not expect to Join with any Worſhip on Earth that is *Perfect*. I am glad when I am concern'd in that which is *Leaſt Faulty*. And tho I would not make Invidious Compariſons, nor Cry up ſome Prayers, to the *Depretiating* of others: Yet I muſt make bold to tell the Dr. That I have heard Biſhops and Dignitaries, and many Doctors, and Divines of this *Church*, (all very Learned and Pious,) Pray without the *Book*, both before their Sermons, and upon other Occaſions, And with ſuch a *Rational and Raiſed Devotion*, as has

been ſo far from Offenſive and Grating, That it has been very Inſtructive and Edifying.

And here I cannot but Reflect, with ſome concernment, on the *Doctor's* Sharp Reprimand of *Praying before Sermon* which he ſays, *Put the Rule of the Church, firſt out of Uſe, and then out of Countenance.* And that it is a *Senſeleſs and Abſurd practice*; *After the Church has been near for an Hour together, Praying for all that is Fit.* And, *That the Bidding-Prayer, againſt all Law and Reaſon, is Juſtled out by this Upſtart Puritanical Encroachment, which is a Conforming to the Phanaticks.*

Pag. 213.

How deſperately doth he Strike here at his *Fathers* and *Brethren*, peradventure the Moſt and the Beſt of this *Church*, That are not to Learn even of this Reverend Dr. either to *Preach* or to *Pray*? And I may add, Nor to *Obey* the *Canons* neither: Tho, I am told, he Learn'd this, at a very *Advantageous* Seaſon; Yet what if I can point him to ſeveral *Canons*, that he doth not think Convenient to be ſo Punctual an Obſerver of, in his Pariſh? And muſt the very Name of *Bidding-Prayer* make this Canon more Binding, and *Bidding and Commanding* above all others? (Like as One Canon in a *Cathedral*, may be more *Imperious* than all the Reſt.) But if Cuſtom has made the *Bidding-Prayer*, (at leaſt, in his ſenſe of it,) as Unfaſhionable as the Standing-Collars, and Prieſts Cloaks, Rather let him Pelt me for following my *Betters*, than

than I'le make my self an *Antick*, Ridiculous to all, (but ſome Starcht *Dons*,) for Appearing ſtill in the *Old ſtiff Ruff*. Yet, (with Submiſſion to Wiſer Judgments.) I offer it to Second Thoughts, Whether he in his heat and *Tranſport* has not wrackt the *Canon* beyond its genuine drift and intention, For I do not find, that the Form there mentioned, is Abſolutely Enjoin'd, So that the Prayer be but [**To that Effect,**] and **as briefly as conveniently the Preachers may.** Of which *Conveniency*, I think themſelves are the Fitteſt *Judges*, or elſe they are not Fit to be *Preachers*. And if they find it not *Convenient* to be ſo *Brief* at one time, as at another, I ſee not but the Canon leaves them at *Liberty*. For even that which, in ſome Ears, ſounds like a ſtrict *Limitation*, in my Judgment, gives a fair *Latitude* for Variation and Addition, and ſhews that the *Canon* does not Impoſe an Indiſpenſible and Unchangeable *Form*, but only Direct to ſome *Heads*, that ſhould not be left out. When it is ſaid, [**In this Form,** or to **this Effect, as briefly as conveniently they may.**] Doth not this leave Room to Vary and Enlarge, beyond the bare words of Prayer expreſt in that *Canon*? For if I were Bound ſtill to keep juſt to that very *Form*, and ſpeak Nothing more than is there Mentioned; it would admit of no *Magis* and *Minus*, nor any thing elſe to be brought in, tho never ſo *Conveniently* and *Briefly*: And ſo run it up to the *Super-Conforming* Height, againſt all *Law* and *Reaſon* indeed.

But if it be ſo *Senſeleſs and Abſurd, to Pray afore Sermon, Becauſe all that is Needful has been asked Before* : To what Senſe then is it, That the *Church* and the *King* muſt be Prayed for again, (as the *Canon* preſcribes,) When it has been done *Three* or *Four* times before? Nay why then muſt the *Lords-Prayer* be Repeated anew, to Shut up the *Bidding-Prayer*, when it has been Uſed alſo as many times the ſame *Morning*?

But he Complains not of another *New Mode*, as much Prevailing among a ſort of Divines, and whereby the *Bidding-Prayer* is, I ſay not only *Equally Juſtled out*, but a great deal more *Deſpiſed*. And that is, When only a *Collect* is uſed before Sermon: (and it may be, the Collect which was uſed *Twice* the ſame Morning before): Whether it be, That ſome think they have Often enough Prayed for the *King* before; and do not care to uſe his *Name* any more than needs they muſt: Or that they are ſo little uſed to ſpeak for themſelves to God, they have nothing to ſay without the *Book*: Sure they are as *Uncanonical* in *Under-doing*, as others in *Over-doing*. Nay they more groſly *Violate* the *Canon*, who do not at all Pray **To the Effect** there mentioned, Than thoſe that do Pray **To that Effect**, But only (as ſome think,) in more Words than Needs.

I have heard the People complain of their Lazineſs, that do ſo ſlight and *Curtail* Prayer before Sermon: Declaring their Offence at the Sermons

Sermons that look ſo *Bald* and *Naked:* And at the Men too which, they think, do ſo little *Give themſelves to Prayer*, That they are aſham'd to ſhew how *Awkward* they are at it: Or at leaſt, betray what little *Kindneſs* they have for it. But if ſome call this *Modeſt* and *Humble*, Let them take it by that *Handle*, and I will think with them as far as ever I can: Where the men are Grave and Serious, Holy and Devout, I will Cenſure *my ſelf* a hundred times, before I will throw one *Cenſure* at any ſuch. Yet for ſome others, when I know the men, and their *Communication*; ſuch as uſe to talk as if they were no *Sacred perſons*, Their mouths more tun'd to *Curſing* than *Bleſſing*, and they more for *Potting* than Praying: I cannot for my heart, count it the Vertue and Grace of empty *Whifflers*, that I hear no more of their *Prayers*. I ſhould eſteem it their Modeſty indeed, Not to *Contradict* themſelves in their *Prayers*, if they did it not in their *Preaching* neither. But from hollow *Formaliſts* who can expect any *Effuſions*, unleſs ſome *Overflowings of the Gall?* And I do not wonder at all, if they Pray not as if they were *Inſpired*, who can Live as if they had not been *Chriſt'ned*. They may catch up ſomewhat made Ready to their Hands, that did *Coſt them nothing*, But to *Compoſe* any thing of their own, They will not make *Bold* to be ſo Diligent, nor to Condemn ſome of their *Superiors*, that practiſe otherwiſe. To *Strive in Prayer*, They are for *Lea-*

ving off ſuch Contention, before it be Medled with It is a *Fervour* that does not agree with their *Conſtitutions*. They will not get themſelves *Heat*, unleſs it be in *Rallying* againſt it, and crying out moſt Tragically, of the *Fanaticiſm* and *Faction*, the *Pride* and *Oſtentation* that attends it. Abuſes, I confeſs, from which it is not exempt, any more than the *Common-Prayer Book* it ſelf is Privileg'd from being *Thumb'd*, and ſoil'd with filthy Fingers. But we are not therefore conſtrain'd to throw either away, becauſe they have been ſo unhappy, to ſuffer ſhamefully, by falling into *Ill hands*.

And methinks, it might give ſome Check to *Epiſcopal* men, (eſpecially if in the Miniſtry,) for Running down the *Gift of Prayer* ſo unmercifully, as to affirm, *That the*

Page 157. *whole Devotion of all that pretend to it, proceeds from no other principle, but only a Love to hear themſelves Talk. And that a Spirit of Pride, Faction, and Sedition is the only Spirit which theſe Impoſtors do really and indeed pray by. And that the Intoxi-*

Page 160. *cating, Bewitching, Cheat of Extempore Prayer has been all along the Devil's Maſter piece, and prime Engine to overthrow our Church by. And therefore it ought by all means to be Exploded and caſt out of every ſober, and well governed Church.* Methinks, I ſay, it might a little Cool and Pacify all this *Heat* and *Rant* againſt the *Gift of Prayer*, That its Cauſe has been openly Eſpous'd and maintain'd by a very

very Learned and Pious *Doctor*, after made a Right Reverend *Biſhop*, and one that ſo much Adorned the *Seat* he held: (Tho peradventure, *Somebody* that is out of Humour, may ſpeak as ſcornfully of him, as he does of Another, who was lately the higheſt of the *Epiſcopal* Order in this *Church*: and is now further than ever out of the Reach of all ſuch Malevolent *Detractors*, as indeed before his much-Lamented *Death*, could only ſhew the *Teeth* which they knew not where to *Faſten*, and went tormented with this Vexation, that he whom they Stomach'd ſo much for that which (if a Fault,) he could not help, his *Prince*'s Kindneſs; had Learning, Worth and Goodneſs that made him too great a *Match* for them all, and left them no Room, but only to Diſhonour themſelves, in attempting to *Leſſen* Him. When no Charge could be found to ruin his Reputation, but his *Moderation*, That he ſhould offer to *make it known to all men*, and let the World ſee, that he would never be one of the *Jehu's*, to keep pace with ſuch *Hot-ſpurs*, as could never Forgive him, if but for that near *Similitude* on which was founded his Inviolable *Friendſhip* with the Excellent *Perſon* I am going to quote;) who publiſh'd an accurate *Diſcourſe* concerning *the Gift of Prayer:* and therein tells us, *That Miniſters are more eſpecially concern'd in this Gift, and that it is the greater Fault and Shame for them to be without it.*

Archbiſhop Tillotſon.

Biſhop Wilkins.

And

And if it be a fault not to ſtrive and labour after it, How much more to Jeer and deſpiſe it, by the Name of Extempore Prayer, and Praying by the Spirit? Which expreſſions (ſays he) *as they are frequently uſed by ſome men, in way of Reproach, are for the moſt part, a ſign of a prophane heart, and of ſuch as are altogether ſtrangers to the Power and Comfort of this Duty.* And if any think this to be but one great *Doctor*'s opinion, It were eaſy to produce vaſt numbers that have made this *Church* as famous as any that ever liv'd in it, *alike minded.* And tho I pretend not to acquaintance with many *Biſhops*, any further than by their Writings; yet thoſe with whom in my Time, I have had opportunity to be moſt concern'd, diſdained not to ſignify their Favour this Way: Whatever *Sons of the Church* think fit to Decline and Reproach it. And I cannot reckon it any Honour to our *Spiritual Fathers*, to make people believe, that they are generally againſt it: or would Impoſe the *Common-Prayer* in Defiance of all elſe. As that muſt not be Neglected, ſo the Miniſters *Talent* ſure ought not to be *Napkin'd*, But upon occaſion he is to ſhew, That he is fit to ſpeak out of his own ſtock for his People *unto God*, as well as to ſpeak ſo *from God* to the People.

But to what a Note above *Ela* has he ſtrain'd the String, whom even the profeſſed Vindicators of our *Liturgy* cannot come a-near? When the famous Mr. *Mead*, even where he is Juſtifying the Uſe of Set Forms, for all ſuch occaſions

ſions as they ſerve for, Yet thus ends that diſcourſe, *If any ſudden and unexpected occaſion happen, for which the Church cannot provide, The Spirit of her Miniſters is Free: Who will forbid them in ſuch a caſe, to ſupply that by a Voluntary and Arbitrary Form, which the Church could not provide for in a Set Form?* With whom Dr. *Falkner* ſets in, (Lib. Eccleſ. *p.* 120.) *Nor doth the Eſtabliſhing a Form for the Publick Office of the Church deny the Liberty in due place of uſing other Prayers, according to the practice of ours, and the Ancient Church.* Diatrib. on Mat. 6. 9.

A Chriſtian that cannot Pray, (ſays the good Biſhop,) how much more a Miniſter,) *is like an Orator that cannot Speak, or a Traveller that cannot go. This Gift is a part of our Spiritual Armour: And for a Soldier to be without any skill in the Uſe of his Arms, is both an Unſuitable, and a Dangerous condition.* And what he there ſpeaks of the Advantages of this Gift, and the Inconveniencies of its Want to Private Chriſtians, is ſtill more applicable to him that is the *Mouth* of the People. *viz. To be able upon all occaſions to relate their Condition, according to eſpecial circumſtances and ſeveral Emergencies. Or elſe when ſurpriz'd by any ſudden Exigente, or lying under any great Strait, wherein no Help is to be expected but from the Hand of God: To be at a Loſs what to ſay, without having recourſe to ſome preſcribed Form, (which perhaps has no proper reference to the particular occaſion;) How*

Inconvenient

Inconvenient and prejudicial will this be, to lye under such a Disability of Expression?

The Readiness of Expression and Enlarging our Desires in fit manner, That, he calls the *Gift of Prayer*, Tho some, I know, would have it to consist in those *Pious Dispositions* within us, which I take to be rather, *The Spirit of Supplications*. For sure we ought to Distinguish the one from the other. However it is Possible for them to stand together, and most Lovely they are in *Conjunction:* Yet one may have a *Praying Heart*, that hath not a *Voluble Tongue*; And again, another may Roll in apt *Expressions*, that is a Stranger to the *Spirit of Supplications*.

Now tho it is not for the *Weak* to put themselves upon Services above their *Strength*, Yet it looks ill, when men are *Fluent* on other Occasions, and only *Tongue-ty'd* at their Prayers: When they pass for *good Speakers* every where else, but are *Down in the mouth* at the Throne of Grace. This speaks a Defect that is suspicious to be not only their *Calamity*, but their *Impiety*. Indeed the very Sense of Want and Pain, where prevalent, will open the Mouths not otherwise Eloquent, and sometimes suggest and dictate things above their common Capacity. As a *Malefactor*, tho no Orator, yet when Begging for his Life, will find *Words* Significative and Moving. However many may often need the assistance of *Books* and *Forms:* And whoever find their case better Expresst by others, than they know how to do it themselves, have their

their *Liberty* ſo to help themſelves: And inſtead of Scrupling to uſe Others words, may *Thank God* for that *Advantage*, to warm their Hearts, and raiſe their Affections, and Enflame their Devotions.

It makes my Prayer neither better nor worſe, whether my Eyes take words off the *Paper* before me: Or whether by recollection, I fetch them out of my *Memory*, which is (as the Biſhop calls it,) but a kind of *Inviſible Book*.

To Read or ſpeak by Rote,
Is all alike to him that Prays
With's Heart, what with his Mouth he ſays.
Harvey.

But that I will conclude to be the *Beſt* way for me to take, whichſoever it be, that helps me to Pray moſt pertinently, humbly, faithfully, and fervently. Some can Pray better with this Form, ſome with that, and ſome with none. Therefore Let every *Devout* Chriſtian that makes Conſcience of Worſhip, and gives himſelf to Prayer, conſult his own *Experience*, and Enjoy his *Liberty*, to take that way which he finds Beſt for himſelf. There is an *Abridging* ourſelves, that gives Check to our Improvement: And I am not tied always to uſe this very *Staff* or any at all, If I find that I can do as well, or Better without it. There is a *Growth* in Knowledge and Grace, as well as in Bodily Stature and Strength. And ſome *Sutes* of Prayer,

er, as well as *Suits* of Cloaths, we may be *Outgrown*. As Piety brings me upon my Knees then, So Prudence muſt *Adapt* my Words. Tho *Old* words, it's true, may be uſed with *New Affections*, and ſerve as well where the caſe is the ſame: Yet there are ſome New *Occaſions* of my Life that call for a *New Song*. And where the Expreſſions as well as Affections are *New*, and the beſt that we can fetch out of our *Treaſure*, It ſpeaks the *Value* which we put upon our *Benefactors* favours, That we prize them more than to mention them ſtill in the ordinary *Rote*. We count it not only Flat and *Dilute*, but Contemptuous and *Slighting*, to ſpeak after that Manner, to our great *Friends* on earth; How much more concern'd ſhould we be to Appear before the *Greateſt* and *Beſt* of all which is in *Heaven*, with ſomewhat to expreſs our higheſt *Regard* of Him and his Bleſſings, and alſo our moſt *Careful Hearts* to approve our ſelves *Senſible* and duly *Affected*? Of which our Speech is the *Indication*: And ſo that we Expreſs our ſelves *to the purpoſe*, it matters not whether the words be *our own*, or *Borrowed*, from one or another: We may *Preſs* them into this Service wherever we find them. But thou poor weak Chriſtian, whoſe *Parts and Abilities* are not equal to thy *Zeal and Piety*, When thou art *Moved* to Pray, and haſt but a *Praying Heart*, O take heed that thou never Forbear thy Prayers, for want of Words at *Command*, to Set them off. For if thou couldſt

not

not ſo much as Read, or Speak at all; Yet thou might'ſt *Pray.* And tho thou haſt not a *Fluency* of Speech and Choice of Expreſſions, in a Readineſs, (which indeed are *Gifts* more for the Service and Edification of *others*, than for any Saving Benefit to the *Owners:*) Yet throw and *Proſtrate* thy ſelf before the *Lord*, and Try to make ſomewhat of it, in opening the ſenſe and the Deſires of thy Soul, at the Throne of Grace, or Doing as thou *Canſt*, where thou canſt not as thou *Would'ſt:* And thou may'ſt do e'en as well without the Flowing Utterance and *Elocution*; Yea peradventure, *Better:* Becauſe thereby thou art kept *Humbler*, and ſo fitter for his *Acceptance*, who *to this man will Look, even to him that is Poor and of a Contrite Spirit and trembles at his Word.*

SECT. VIII.

The Liberty of Varying our Prayers, as to the Parts *and* Words.

THE uſual Method of Prayer is *Confeſſion, Petition*, and *Thankſgiving*. Yet we are not in every Prayer, tied up juſt to this *Order*. We may ſometimes omit one of the Parts, or put the Laſt Firſt, or only *Beg*, without Explicite *Confeſſing* our Sins, or *Bleſſing* the Lord. Tho we are Bound to all theſe things, yet not at all *Times* that we make our Prayers. We may Inſiſt but upon one Point, and yet not Maim

Maim or Mangle our Devotions: According as we are particularly *Diſpoſed* in our Minds, or preſt with any particular *Occaſions* in our Lives. That which at this *Time*, we find we have moſt *Need* to do, or are fitteſt for the doing, To do it Heartily will ſuffice, and find Acceptance, Tho every thing be not mentioned that belongs to a *Full Prayer*. It is not a Guilt at which we need to Deject our ſelves, for Curtailing and *Diſmembring* our Offices, When we leave out ſome *Part*, and are Intent upon another, in which we think our ſelves *Now* more immediately Concerned. 'Tis well, and indeed a great Attainment, in which we may Hug our ſelves, If we can diſpatch but any one Part, with ſerious and fervent Devotion. Tho the *Enumeration* and Confeſſion of our Sins, with Confuſion of face and *Compunction* of heart, to Humble us before the Lord, and prepare us for his Pardon and Grace, is of the greateſt uſe for poor *Obnoxious* Sinful Creatures: Yet in our Lord's own *Form* there is no *Confeſſion*, but only what is *Tacit* and *Implicite*: As where in asking for *Daily Bread*, we acknowledge our Wants and Indigence: In begging *Forgiveneſs of our Treſpaſſes*, we acknowledge our Guilt and Wickedneſs: And in Praying not to be *Lead into Temptation*, we acknowledge our Weakneſs, and how prone we are of our ſelves, to go all to Naught: And alſo that we *Deſerve* the Puniſhment, which we Pray to be *Delivered from*. So that altho we ſhould be us'd and forward

forward to *Confeſſion*, Yet we muſt not Entangle our *Conſciences* with a Conceit of the *Neceſſity* lying upon us, expreſly to Confeſs our Sins in every Prayer: Nor yet the Neceſſity of particularly Reciting the Mercies and Favours which we have received at the hands of God. Tho Thankfulneſs (which is our good Manners towards Heaven) as much becomes his *Obliged*, as Confeſſion (which is a Self Arraignment, to clear our Judge,) becomes his *Offenders*: Yet there may be the *Broken* and the *Grateful* heart, ſenſible both of Sin and Mercy, without the particular Naming, either our Sins, or God's Benefits.

However 'tis my own Senſe, and my deſire to make all I can alike minded, That it not only Becomes, but *Behoves* us to be Thankful: which being a Tribute we owe to the Crown of *Heaven*, I count it no better than *Wrong* and *Robbery* to withhold it. Nay ſo Material a point is this, That ſome (I think, not amiſs) have ſumm'd up the whole of our Religion in the one Word, *Gratitude*: To be ſenſible of our Receits from Above, and all our Obligations to the Lord, and ſtill Acknowledging the Debt, which we are never Able to Pay: Full of Concernment, *What we ſhall render to the Lord for all his Benefits*; And where the Poverty of our caſe checks all thoughts of Retaliation, yet giving unto God, at leaſt, the *Glory* of his own Gifts: Yea for the due Expreſſion of this Gratitude, Loving and Honouring, and Praiſing our great

Benefactor, Truſting and Delighting in him, Afraid to Offend and Loſe him, and ſtudying and ſtriving in all things, to Pleaſe him. And as it is our *Reaſonable Service*, and the moſt Ingenuous Diſpoſition of Soul, (as well as the ſweeteſt Solace of our Lives, The *Marrow and Fatneſs* of our Religion, and the joyful Employment of Bleſſed Spirits above,) thus to Obſerve and Recount, to Particularize and Magnify the Favours of Heaven to us; So 'tis the moſt Decent Begging of what is yet Wanting: and our prudential Gaining upon the *Goodneſs of God*, to run on ſtill in the ſame Channel: Seeing he accounts his Benefits there beſt placed, where they are moſt Gratefully Reſented. This then we muſt be in care not to leave Undone: And yet I dare not ſay that we are bound to do it (*toties quoties*) every time we Pray.

So tho it looks moſt proper for the Guilty and *Conſcious*, to go upon their Submiſſion to the Holy Majeſty offended, and before they *Ask*, to Acknowledge how unworthy they are to *Receive*: and make their Confeſſions the *Introduction* to their Prayers: Yet a Great man, well vers'd in theſe matters, The Right Reverend Biſhop *Hall*, (in an Epiſtle concerning the *Continual exerciſe of a Chriſtian to Keep his heart*,) gives this Advice, To begin our Prayers with the *Praiſes of God*, Taking notice of all his Goodneſs to us, and the great things which ſtill he has done for us, and the continued Favours

yours with which he goes on to Oblige us. To be *in Thankſgiving firſt, and then in Requeſts.* And to Bethink our ſelves, How Unworthy we have walk'd of ſuch Mercy, and to recount our Abuſes of his Kindneſs and Love, may prove an effectual Method to *Melt* and Diſſolve our hard and ſtony Hearts: That laying to heart, how Good he has been to us, and how wretchedly we have Misbehav'd our ſelves, and carried moſt ill to the *Beſt* of *Fathers*, *The Goodneſs of God may lead us to Repentance.* Now they that, upon trial, find the *Benefit* of this courſe, are *Free*, to take it. And I ſhall not think it *Preposterous* in my Prayers, To deliver my ſelf *Firſt* of that which lies moſt upon my *Spirit*, and chiefly Affects my Heart, whatever it be; Good things to be Begged: Or Sins or Mercies to be Acknowledged: I take it for a *Direction* and *Call*, to *Begin* with that which I am ſo *Full* of, and in Pain till I have poured it out; However it may ſeem to *Invert* the common Order.

And if you make uſe of *Another*'s Form; You muſt not think your ſelves obliged to every Word, and to take *All before you:* But may alter or add, or leave out, as Diſcretion ſhall ſuggeſt, or you Judge fitteſt for your purpoſe. They that are Converſant with God have a *Taſte* for Spiritual things, as well as for their common *Food*, To Diſtinguiſh between better and worſe. And then they are not Bound to take all that they find, and to ſwallow that which they do not *Like:* But may pick out of

the *Book*, all one as at the *Table*, what is *Agreeable*, and let the reſt alone; and make it up with what they find moſt Grateful to them, and Beneficial for them.

Yea he that is to be the *Speaker*, in Praying with others, may *Change* his Prayers, according to the Company, without being a ſinful *Time-ſerver*, or *Man-pleaſer*. Tho it is the ſame *God* I ſpeak to every where, Yet the Wants and Humours of men are ſo exceeding *Different*, that what moſt *Takes* with ſome is as much *Diſguſted* by others. And tho I am not to Comply with them to Harden or Hurt them, and muſt not care ſo much to *Pleaſe men as God*, nor be check'd by the Company, nor let my Devotion flutter among them, inſtead of flying up to *Heaven*, nor Regard any *Men* comparably to the *Great God*, But *Ceaſe from Man whoſe breath is in his noſtrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of?* Yet there is a Lawful *Becoming all things, to all men*, and Pleaſing all for their Good to *Edification*. And I muſt give no Juſt Offence to any. However ſome may be Offended at that which is not really *Offenſive*, Yet if I know it to be *Diſtaſtful*, I would not offer it, if I could well avoid it, I would not *Obtrude* upon them the Food of their Souls ſo *Cook'd*, as they cannot *Abide* it, But give them the ſame thing, in another *Vehicle* and *Preparation*. And that not to be applauded by them, or to *Ingratiate* my ſelf with them: But to be moſt Uſeful to them, and beſt to ſerve the *Ends* of Religion upon them.

them. And upon this account, I ſcruple not, ſometimes, to *Vary* my Prayers, according to the *Genius* and Inclination of the *Company* with whom I am to Pray. For two Companies may be both of them Pious and well diſpos'd, And yet the one all for that *Way* which the other is as much *Againſt*. And I have no Scruple of Conſcience againſt *either way*. If then I would not *Offend* but *Edify* them, I muſt take the way which I perceive to be moſt *Agreeable*. That they may heartily *Concur* with me, and that my Prayers may not be an Exerciſe of their *Patience*, but of their *Devotion*.

CHAP. III.

The Liberty of Praying as to the Time.

SECT. I.

The Liberty of Praying at Any *Time.*

THE Scripture-Command is, To *Seek the Lord while he may be Found, and to Call upon him while he is Near.* And the Time when he will be Found, is *All day long.* For as long as he Stretches forth his Hands to *Receive us*, we may Lift up our Hands to *Receive of Him.* And the whole Day of *Grace* is the *Hour of*

Prayer. And whenever we have a *Heart* to Pray, God hath an *Ear* to attend it. Earthly Kings, it's true, are not always to be ſpoken with. *Courtiers* themſelves cannot have the Princes *Ear* when they Will. He can never Hear all his *Subjects* Cries, and it is but rarely that he Hears *any*. And ſometimes when he doth, He is only *Exaſperated* at the Petitioners, and had rather they would let him alone. And we our ſelves uſe to put off the Beggars that preſs often upon us, Telling them how *Lately* they have been with us, and twitting them with the Courteſies they have ſo many times *Received* from us. We make that which we have done already, an *Excuſe* to hold our Hands. Such is the *Imperfection* of Mortals, and the *Indigence* of Creatures, that we are *Tired* out, to be Long Urged: And our ſtock will be *Exhauſted* by frequent Diſtribution. But God whoſe Underſtanding, Power, and Love are as *Infinite* as Himſelf, is ever at *Leiſure* to Hear us, and can receive no manner of *Diſturbance* from all the Throngs of Seekers. Thô every Creature all over the *Univerſe* ſhould Call upon him at the ſame *Moment*, (as by their Wants and continual Need of him, they all do:) His Ears are ſtill *Open* to them All. For as all the World is no more trouble to him, than if it were but *One man*: So every particular Man is as much Minded by Him, as if that man were *all the World*. And equal to his Knowledge of all our Wants is his *Ability* and

and *Inclination* to do for all his Petitioners. Come as oft as we will, He will look the *sweeter* upon us. At any Time he is *Ready* for us, To receive our Suits, and give Audience to what we have to ſay. Nay, he makes his Gifts the *Motives* of more, and goes on to do, becauſe he has done much *Already*. So that his Experienced Bounty, is his *Peoples Argument* to Speed. And even from what they have had, they Plead for what they would have. Gen. 32. 10, 11. *Mercy and Truth thou haſt ſhewed to thy Servant. Deliver me I pray thee.* And Pſal. 27. 9. *Thou haſt been my Help; Leave me not, neither Forſake me O God of my Salvation.*

We have no Excuſe then ever to keep off from *God*, As we are ſhy of Viſiting our *Friends* too thick, leaſt they ſhould be *Sick* of us, and Weary to do us Good. God hath not only certain Times of *Hearing*, As Sabbaths, and Holy-days, and ſuch and ſuch *Critical Junctures*, appointed for the purpoſe. No Time is Unſeaſonable to Viſit Heaven with our Prayers. Evening and Morning, Noon and Midnight, the Gates lye open to us. If we be there every *Day*, and every *Hour*, we ſhall find no *Repulſe*, but ſtill the better Welcome. *If All day long our Heart is in our Knee*, Herb. We are not Limited, Go as oft as we will, it is no oftner than we are Called, For the Word is, *Pray without Ceaſing.*

SECT. II.

Of Praying Without Ceasing.

THE Injunction, 1 Thes. 5. 17. seems to *Infringe* the *Liberty* of *Prayer*, instead of Enlarging it: For if we must be *Always Praying*, The Time is not at our *Disposing*, nor have we the Liberty ever to Leave off. Nay, instead of offering us a gracious *Liberty*, This *Text* seems to Load us with a hard *Necessity*, that carries in it an *Impossibility*. For how can any man in the world *Pray Always?* I answer, The *Apostle* cannot here be understood, as enjoyning us so to Pray, that we should do *Nothing else:* Because one Duty must not *Interfere* with another, nor Justle out all the rest. And we have many other things to do besides Praying. Therefore it must be *softened* so as to require of us only what we can well perform. And that is, To keep our selves still in a *Frame* and disposition for Prayer, that we may be *Ready*, upon all Occasions, to fall into it. For as Bp. *Hall* instructs us, [Devout Soul, p. 10.] *Devotion is not only an Act of Vocal Prayer, But the Habitual disposition of a holy Soul sweetly conversing with God, in all the Forms of a heavenly (yet awful) Familiarity, and a Constant entertainment of ourselves here below with the God of Spirits in our sanctified thoughts and affections.* 'Tis true, The Sacrifice

Sacrifice muſt not be evermore *Actually* in the offering, But the Fire of Devotion ever *Burning* on the *Altar* of the heart. And no day muſt we Intermit our *Times* of Praying, but go on in a *Courſe* of Prayer, without Fainting; and let its Returns be as Conſtant as our *Meals*. And as after our Dinner, we have done Eating for that *Time*: But ſhould we Ceaſe to *Eat*, we muſt Ceaſe to *Live*: So Prayer being a part of our Spriritual Suſtenance, we are every day to make our *Meals* of it, but never have done with it, till we have no *Sins* to be Pardoned, No *Wants* to be ſupplied, That is, till we have attained to ſuch Perfection, as is not in this Life *Attainable*. We muſt not Give over, thô we have not ſtraight every thing that we Ask. But keep our ſuits on the File, *Depending* at the Throne of Grace. And as ſome Denial and drawing back, does but *Whet* the importunate Suiters Requeſt. So if the Lord ſeems ſometimes to *Caſt us away in Diſpleaſure*, Yet we muſt take no Denial, nor be *Weary of well-doing*: But renew and *Double* our Requeſts; For *in Due time we ſhall reap, if we Faint not*. Still we muſt Examine ourſelves for the *Obſtruction*, and ſtrive to Amend the matter in the next Prayer. And then we may take every *Second* Prayer, for an anſwer to the *former*: and conclude, That he who gives us the Grace to *Perſiſt*, *Favours* our Cauſe. Yea the very *Perſeverance* which he gives,

may

may be *Better* than the thing which we asked.

Uſe the *Liberty* granted then, and go on to Pray in Hopes to *Speed*. Seek *every day*, That you may not be ſadly to *Seek* at your *Laſt day*. Some have more *Leiſure*, and they ſhould be *much* in Prayer. And the men of *Buſineſs* ought to Pray for the Succeſs, and *Sanctification* too, of their Buſineſs. But whoever Fears and Loves God, will find Time to Wait upon him *Every Day*, whatever *Stands* the while. In the *Morning* we are Expoſed to the wide World, and have need to put ourſelves under the *Divine Conduct*. And at *Night*, we are as in the *Suburbs* of Death, And therefore before we lie Down, it concerns us to *Even* matters with Heaven, leſt we Riſe not till it be in *Another World*. Much of a Chriſtian's buſineſs lies on his *Knees*. Let us be *Much in Prayer*, while we have Time, And when all our Time is gone, We ſhall have an *Eternity*, to be ever *Praiſing the Lord*.

SECT. III.

Of Chuſing the Beſt *Times for Prayer.*

SEeing we are not punctually Determined, as to particular Times of Prayer, It will be our Wiſdom and Piety, to make choice of the *Fitteſt* Seaſons for that purpoſe. Tho we

we ſhould have our *Stated Times*, to which we may be Conſtant, without any fear of *Superſtition*. And ſhall find it, not ſo Dangerous, as Uſeful, to have the *Sun* and *Clock* for our *Remembrancers*. And tho we count not one Time of the day *Holier* than another, Yet the very Appointing of *Set Times* for Prayer, ſhews that we value the Office more, than to leave it at Random, as a *Chance buſineſs*, Leſt ſo it ſhould be Thrown by, and not done at all. And that we would *Secure* it at certain Seaſons, tho we do not *Confine* it only to thoſe very Times. And tho we are not lightly to Vary and Break ſo good a *Cuſtom*. Yet we may, upon occaſion, Break our *Uſual* Times, without Breaking any of Gods *Commands*. Becauſe he has no where bid us do it *Juſt Now*, but to ſee that it be *Duly* done.

We muſt then *Watch unto Prayer*, not only while we are in it: But alſo to take the *Fitteſt* Times for it. Thoſe (*Mollia Fandi Tempora.*) Favourable Seaſons of Addreſs, when our *Hearts are Fixed*, and the Feet of our Affections *ſtand right*. When *Our beloved puts in his hand by the hole of the door, and our Bowels are moved for him.* Cant. 5. 4. When He that is to do All for us, gives us ſome peculiar *Hint* and intimation, to come now, and Receive, what he is infinitely Full of, and more *Inclinable* to make us Happy with, than we to *Seek* it. When he gives ſuch Intimations of his Favour as *Ahaſhuerus* to *Eſther*, *What is thy Petition, and it ſhall be granted*;

O! let

O! let us prize such *Golden opportunities*, more than ever to Omit and Lose them, when they are set before us.

Chuse the best Time of the *Day*, when your mind is most Composed, and your Soul in fittest Frame for the Work. And neglect not the Spring and Flower of *Age*: But *Seek the Lord Early: Remember him in the days of your Youth*: And he will not cast you off in the time of your *Old Age*. Let it not be only for a *Shift*, that you Fly to him, when the World is *Shaking you off*, and you know not what to do with your selves. But in Health and Prosperity, be drawn by the *Bands of Love*: Before you are *Driven* by a sad Necessity, to Seek the Lord, *When he Slays you*. Yea lest then he turn you over to the *Miserable Comforters*, for whose sake you Forsook Him, and make you find the *Verification* of that Threat, Prov. 1. 28. *Then shall they Call upon me, but I will not answer them; They shall Seek me Early, but they shall not find me.* For *surely in the Floods of great Waters, they shall not come nigh to Him.* Psal. 32. 6. In such a dismal *Plunge*, Ungodly mens *Heads* Turn, instead of their *Hearts*. They know not where they are then, nor what to do, nor how to apply to the *God*, to whom they have been still the greatest *Strangers*. And no wonder, He is not at their *Beck*, in their Adversity, whom they did nothing but *Slight* all the days of their Prosperity.

SECT.

SECT. IV.

The Liberty of Praying in Time of Trouble.

THO' Wicked men are at ſo ſad a *Loſs*, in the Time of their ſoreſt *Need*, *Groping* in the Dark for what they would not Seek while they had *Light*. Becauſe they put off the Work of their Salvation, till they were *Weary* of their Lives, and a *Burthen* to themſelves, and good for nothing, but to Nurſe their Diſeaſe, and Bewail their Troubles. And ſo when Invaded with Sickneſs and the Meſſengers of Death, They lie either like *Dead Logs* inſenſible of their condition: Or Struggle as a *Wild Bull in a Net, full of the Fury of the Lord, the Rebuke of their God*: Liſtleſs to *Seek* where their Help lies, Or elſe *Deſpairing* to find it, if Sought. Yet all Pious Souls that have *Given themſelves to Prayers*, find the ſame God of Conſolation to Shelter them in *Affliction*, whom they Delighted in approaching to, during their *Better days*. *In him they have Peace*, when nothing but *Tribulation in the World*: Yea, are *Bold in their God*, tho he looks as if he were againſt them. Knowing that they may be *Caſt down*, and not *Caſt off*. *Poor and Needy*, Yet *thought upon by the Lord*. In a *Low eſtate*, and yet *Remembred* in everlaſting Mercy, By that God who *Abhors not the Affliction of the Afflicted*, Nor Loves his Children ever the leſs, for Chaſtening

ſtening them: But in *very Faithfulneſs Afflicts them*, Out of Kindneſs to them, As that which he knows to be Needful and Beſt for them. And like as we ſprinkle Water on the Fire, to make it burn the Fiercer: He lays Affliction on their *Loins*, not to Diſcourage, but to *Quicken* their Prayers, and to make way for his *Praiſes*: Not to *affright* them from him, but to bring them *Nearer* to Him. Pſal. 50. 15. *Call upon me* (ſays he) *in the day of Trouble, I will Deliver thee: and thou ſhalt Glorify me.* Indeed that *Trouble* whatever it be, does us a great deal of Good, which does not Hinder, but *Invigorate* our Prayers; and makes us able to declare, as that ſore Afflicted man, to his friend coming to Viſit, and asking him How he did? *I thank God* (ſays he) *I can Pray Better ſince theſe Troubles, than ever I could in my life before.* Wilt thou not Pray to *God* then becauſe he *Afflicts* thee? Why for that very Reaſon thou muſt do it the *Rather*. Jam. 5 13. *Is any among you afflicted? Let him Pray.* At all Times we ſhould gladly embrace the *Advantage* of Drawing nigh to our Gracious *God*, and Pouring out our Hearts before him. But eſpecially when his *Hand* is upon us, our *Eyes* and *Hearts* ſhould be lifted up to Him; Who has *Torn and Smitten*, and alone can *Heal and Bind up our Breaches.* Whatever be the Diſtreſs, *God is a Refuge ſufficient for us. Our Refuge and Strength, our preſent Help in Time of Trouble.* 'Tis to ſome purpoſe, to make our application

to

to Him, who at the Loweſt can *Raiſe*, and at the Worſt, is able to *Relieve* us. *Refuge failed me, no man cared for my Soul*; yet *I cried unto thee O Lord, and ſaid, Thou art my Refuge, and my Portion in the Land of the Living.* Pſal. 142. 4, 5. Yea thô men *Provoke* him, and are *Brought Low for their Iniquity, Nevertheleſs he Regards their Affliction, when he hears their Cry.* Pſal. 106. 43, 44. Thô Fooliſh Sinners, for their *Tranſgreſſions and Iniquities are Afflicted*, Yet when they *Cry to the Lord in their Troubles, He ſaves them out of their Diſtreſs.* Pſal. 107. 17— 16. Whatever comes upon us, it cannot *Undo* us, as long as we have the way open to the *Almighty Friend* in whom is our Help. Whatever we *Loſe*, We may ask and have a *Better* thing at his Hands. Whatever we Suffer, if we make our moan, and cry to him for Succor, He will Remove it from us, or Sanctify and Sweeten it to us, that it ſhall do us no Hurt, but *Work for our Good.* With this *Staff* of Prayer, we may walk over *Rocks* and *Mountains*, and Surmount all our Troubles and Diſaſters. Whoever are againſt us, and run us down, No matter, if we can Appeal to Heaven, and have God our Friend, and Engage the Almighty Lord of all into our Intereſts. *For my Love they are my Adverſaries, but I give my ſelf unto Prayer.* Pſ. 109. 4. Inſtead of *Wrangling* with them, I turn to Him that can order them, and Save me from them: Or make me more than amends for all the *Damage* that I can ſuſtain by them. When I am in Heavineſs and

my

my Spirit is overwhelmed within mē; To unload my Breaſt before the Lord, Eaſes my Oppreſſed mind, and helps me to that Relief from *Above*, which the *World* cannot give. As *Hannah, after ſhe had Prayed to the Lord in Bitterneſs of Soul, and pour'd it out, and wept ſore: She went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more ſad.* 1 Sam. 1. 10, 15, 18.

Let me be ſhut up in *Priſon*, none can Impriſon my Prayers: but my Soul may *Expatiate* and ſally out to my *Father which ſees in Secret*. No Walls or Irons can ſtop me from Him, who is every where Preſent, and *Nigh unto all that Call upon him*. I am but a Priſoner in the *Body*, and in this World, (which is but a greater *Jail*,) But Prayer ſets me at *Large*, and carries me even to *Heaven* aforehand. And however I am Tempted, Troubled, and ſore put to it, Still I have Leave and Liberty to *Remonſtrate*, and make my moan Above, and ſeek Redreſs at the hands of *Omnipotent Love*. And let me continue ſo to Seek, and Pray *Heartily*, And I ſhall be *Happy* in ſpight of all Diſaſters and miſery.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

The Liberty for the Place *of Prayer.*

THE Infinite *Majeſty* that is every where *Preſent*, is no more tied to *Places* than *Times*. *I will that men Pray Every where*, ſaith the Apoſtle, 1 *Tim.* 2. 8. The whole World is *God's Houſe*, and no Place of it unfit wherein to *Invocate* him that *Made* it. Not a Hole or Corner where He that *fills Heaven and Earth*, is not Aware of me. We may *Hallow* any Ground we tread upon, and *Conſecrate* every Place we come in, for a *Proſeucha*, the *Chappel* and *Altar* of our Devotion, by offering up our Prayers to *Jehovah Shammah*, *The Lord that Sees us*. And when we have no better, even a *Dunghill* or a *Dungeon* will be *Oratories*, as recommending as the *Temple*. Thô when it is at our choice, The *Church*, which is peculiarly ſtiled *The Houſe of Prayer*, muſt be Preferred: And while we have the Liberty and opportunity of *Going with the Multitude to the Houſe of God*, and thoſe *Doors* lie Open to us, We muſt take heed of Slighting the Bleſſed *Priviledge*, So much prized by the Servants of the Lord that *Enjoy* it, and ſo much Bewailed by them that *Want* it. We muſt dread to *Excommunicate* our ſelves from the Aſſemblies where the Lord *Feeds, and makes his Flock to reſt*, and not be as thoſe that *Turn aſide by the*

Flocks of his Companions. Inſtead of making that heavy *Judgment* our wilful *Choice*, To turn our ſelves out of the Courts of the *Houſe of our God*, we muſt greatly rejoice in the Favour, and with all our hearts, be glad of the Freedom, *To go into the Houſe of the Lord.* Yea, we muſt *Long for his Courts, and Love the Habitation of his Houſe*, and count it ſo *Amiable*, that we had rather be *Janitors* in his Temple, where his Reteiners are *Still praiſing him*, and *Every one ſpeaks of his Honour*, than to have all the Pomp and Splendor of the World, among the Strangers and Enemies to God, that do nothing but deſpiſe and Affront him. *O! enter into his Gates with Thankſgiving, and into his Courts with Praiſe. Be Thankful to him and Bleſs his Name.* Pſal. 100. 4. Not only accept the Benefit while offered, but Prize it moſt highly, and Embrace it moſt eagerly. Rejoicing with all your Souls, that you may be ſo Happy, there to make your Prayers.

But yet you muſt not take Prayer for a *Sacrifice* tied only to that *Holy Place*, nor uſe to Pen up all your Religion within the *Church-walls*, and there let it lie till the next time. Your own Houſes alſo are to be *Bethel*'s and *Houſes of Prayer*; Such Families, where the *Name* of God is daily and duly *Call'd upon.* Every Maſter in his Houſe may *Officiate* as the *Prieſt*, without Uſurping the Honour of *Aaron* to himſelf. And by ſuch Leading the way in God's humble Worſhip at thy *Houſe*, thou owneſt

him

him to be more *Maſter* there than thy ſelf. Which will be ſo far from Loſing, that it will *Greaten* thee more than any thing elſe can do, and make thee far more conſiderable and Worthy, than all the Proud Scorning of his Service, as a thing Below thee. *For them that Honour him*, God has promiſed to *Honour*.

But of all the Houſe, our Lord hath given a peculiar *Conſecration* to the *Cloſet*, where when the Door is *Shut* and Barr'd up, (to make it yet more a *Cloſet*,) under that *Confinement* lies the greateſt *Liberty*: And ſuch a *Priſoner* is the moſt *Free* to *Expatiate* in Prayer. When *Sequeſtred* from the World, thou maiſt much better Deſcend into thy own Heart: And more out of the danger of *Oſtentation*, maiſt Pour out all thy Soul, and demonſtrate thy Faith in the *Omnipreſence* and continual Inſpection of that God to whom *Cloſets* and *Hearts* are as Open as *High-ways*, and the Face of the *Congregation*. The Lord calls to ſee the Countenance, and to *Hear the Voice of his Dove, in the Clefts of the Rocks, in the Secret place of the Stairs*. Cant. 2. 14. In ſuch *Retirements* he uſes moſt freely to *Impart* Himſelf. And there ſhould we caſt and covet to Meet *Him whom our Souls Love*. And not think it any *hard Put* upon us, but the moſt ſweet and bleſſed Advantage, to leave even the beſt and Deareſt Company, to go to God our *Exceeding Joy*. *What care I for Chatting with Friends on earth*, (ſaid Biſhop *Hall*, ſhut up in the Tower,) *when I may talk familiarly*

with the God of Heaven ? As our *Saviour* gave a diſcharge even to his own Diſciples, Mat. 26. 36. *Tarry ye here, while I go and Pray yonder :* So get ſometimes out of the *Crowd* and *Hurry* of worldly Avocations and diſtractions, that thou maiſt find a full *Vacation* and happy *Freedom* to wait upon thy God. And when ſo taken up with Him in *Secret*, bethink thy ſelf, what main *Grievance* it is thou haſt to make thy moan of: What eſpecial *Favour* thou haſt to Beg: What Sin that lieth hardeſt upon thy *Conſcience* to be Pardoned : What noiſom *Corruption* to be Healed : What moſt Wanted *Grace* or Good thing, to be Deſired. And there tell all, as having the faireſt Opportunity to be *Bold* : And put on *hard*, as one that will not be Denied.

Abraham Retired into his *Grove* : *Iſaac* to the *Field*: *Jacob* Wreſtled with God upon the *Way* : *Elijah* Prayed under the *Juniper-Tree* : *Jeremiah* in the *Dungeon* : *Daniel* in the *Lions Den* : *Jonah* in the *Whales Belly* : Our *Saviour* in the *Garden*, and often in the *Mount* : St. *Peter* on the *Houſe-Top*. No matter what is the Place, ſo it miniſter to our Devotion, and help us indeed to *Draw nigh to God* : Which is not to be done with the Body, and ſhifting of Places, but in the *Elevation* of the Heart, and *Fervor* of Affections. (*Non Paſſibus, ſed Precibus itur ad Deum, Aug.*) Prayer is the *Meſſenger*

Meſſengēr that doth our Errand there, where *Fleſh* cannot come. And wherever a man is, or however taken up, even in the midſt of his Worldly occaſions, His *Soul* may fly out, and ſteal away to *God*: Or ſend up Secret *Ejaculations* that ſhall pierce the *Heavens*, and find as ſure a *Conveyance*, as if they had bounded from the *Temple*. However then we ſhould be Glad to to go into the *Houſe of the Lord*, when Opportunity ſerves: Yet when we have a *Motion* to Prayer any where, we muſt not withhold it, for want of a *Better Place*, from whence to ſend it up.

CHAP. V.

The Liberty of Prayer, as to the Perſons Praying.

SECT. I.

The Liberty that All Sorts *have to Pray.*

EVery one that is Godly ſhall Pray unto thee ô Lord. Pſal. 32. 6. No Godly man but will do it. And all manner of Perſons, as they have *Need*, So they are *Allowed* to do it. Only the *Prieſt* of old entred the *Holy Place*: Now

he that hath Loved and Redeemed us, and waſh'd us from our Sins in his own Blood, hath made us all *Kings and Prieſts unto God.* Rev. 1. 6. God is no *Reſpecter of Perſons.* The Pooreſt ſhall have as fair and full a Hearing with Him, as the Biggeſt man in the World. Tho he be the *moſt High*, yet the *Loweſt* are not beneath his Notice. If they are Low in their own eyes, and *Poor in Spirit*, as well as of Low Eſtate, and Poor in the *World*, They are indeed the Nearer to his Acceptance, Who *hath Reſpect unto the Lowly. And to this man will Look, that is Poor, and of a Contrite Spirit, and Trembles at his Word.* Iſa. 66. 2. *This Poor man cried, and the Lord Heard him, and ſaved him out of all his Troubles.* Pſal. 34. 6. From the Height of his *Sanctuary* he looks down even upon the moſt *Abject* wretches on Earth. Even ſuch as are Rejected of men, and juſt ready to be *Thruſt* out, as not fit to Live in the World. *To hear the groaning of the Priſoner. To looſe thoſe that are Appointed to death.* Pſal. 102. 20. *He will Regard the Prayer of the Deſtitute, and not deſpiſe their Prayer.* v. 17. The Lord ſees not as man ſees: To Regard men according to their Garb and Dreſſes, but according to their Faith and Graces. Yea according to their Cries and Neceſſities. And even that *Abjection* and Beggary, for which others *Overlook* and Scorn them, is the very *Motive* of God's Inclining to them, and taking Notice of them. *Do thou for me O God the Lord for thy Names ſake, becauſe thy mercy is good, Deliver*

Deliver thou me, For I am Poor and Needy. Pſal. 109. 21. *For the Oppreſſion of the Poor, for the Sighing of the Needy, now will I ariſe ſaith the Lord, I will ſet him at Liberty.* Pſal. 12. 5. Tho God, that hath *Choſen the Poor of this World*, is not Fond of a man, only for this reaſon, becauſe he is *Poor*; For there may not be more Wicked men than many Poor men: Yea ſuch as are fain to Beg their *Bread* of Men, may yet be none of Gods *Beggars*, and ſo none of his *Favourites*. This, not for their Bodily wretchedneſs, but for their Souls Ungodlineſs, becauſe matters are not ſo Ill with their *Bodies*, but they are Worſe with their *Souls*. Yet (*cæteris paribus*) No Poor man ſhall be ever the leſs Welcome with God, for his *Poverty*: but be as ſoon Heard, and as much Reſpected by Him, as *His Excellency*, or *His Highneſs*, the moſt Eminent and Mighty, who look to be *Obſerved* of all, and that every one elſe muſt be *Silent*, when they *Speak*. Such are often too High, to be God's Humble Servants. Like the *Wicked*, Pſal. 10. 4. *Who thrô the Pride of his Countenance will not Seek after God.* Tho there is none ſo Rich and well-provided, but they ſtand in continual need of *God's Alms*: And they that abound in the *World's Good*, muſt yet beg of him their *Daily Bread*, and have need (of all men,) to Pray hard, That they may not be put off with their *Portion in this Life*, and be *Tormented*, when *Lazarus* ſhall be *Comforted*. Let not the Rich man rejoice ſo much in his *Riches*, as that he

may go to God, to ſave him from the *Danger* of them. And let him not Pray the Leſs, but the More, That thrô ſo many *Temptations*, he may get Safe into the *Kingdom of God*. Let not any *Nobles*, *Gentlemen* or *Ladies* ever fear it will Debaſe their Dignity, to *Cringe* to Him, that has far greater than any *Kings* or *Queens* on Earth, for his daily Attendants. If they are too Goodly to be Godly, they will be too High to be Saved. Prayer is *Man well Dreſt*. Herb. The fineſt Creature is beſt *Adorned*, when moſt *Humbled*. And when the *Knees* are Bowed, the *Mouth* Confeſſing, the *Hands* Smiting, the *Eyes* Blubbered, the *Cheeks* bedewed: Nothing in the ſight of Heaven is more Becoming and *Recommending*. *Ephraim* was heard ſo *Bemoaning* himſelf, And preſently it follows, *Is Ephraim my dear Son, is he a pleaſant Child? For ſince I ſpake againſt him, I do earneſtly remember him ſtill, I will ſurely have mercy on him, ſaith the Lord.* Jer. 31. 18, 19, 20.

But if the *King of Heaven* will admit of the Pooreſt mans Requeſt, and ſuch as ſhould not be ſuffered to ſpeak to their *Prince*, ſhall be Heard ſpeaking as much, and as often as they will, to their *God*, O! how Unwiſe and Wicked then are thoſe *Poor*, that will not thus *Ingratiate* and prefer themſelves, to be as *Great* with God, as they are *Deſpicable* in the World? That they may not Loſe both Worlds, but Pray themſelves into a better *Kingdom*, than all the Kingdoms on Earth.

Let

Let the *Afflicted* Pray, That they may not *Periſh in their Troubles* And let the *Proſperous* Pray, That they may not be *Deſtroyed* by their very Proſperity. Let the *Idle* Pray, becauſe they have *Leiſure*. And let the *Buiſy* Pray, to *Hallow* their Imployments. *Spare time* can never be better *Beſtowed*. And the Soul amidſt *Multiplicity* of Buſineſs can never be better *Secured*. Let the *Learned* Pray, becauſe they Know *How*. And let the *Ignorant* Pray, That they may be *Taught of God* to Know more. The beſt *Scholars* are they that have Learned to be Readieſt at their *Prayers*. And ſuch as beſt *Know* themſelves will be moſt forward to *Humble* themſelves before the Lord, and know how *Good* it is for them to *Draw nigh unto God*. And none muſt forbear their Prayers, becauſe they be not fine *Speakers*. But, *If any man lack Wiſdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all men Liberally, and upbraideth not, and it ſhall be given him.* *Jam.* 1. 5. The *Silliеſt* wretch, by this means, may come to Know enough, to do his Buſineſs, to make him *Wiſe to Salvation*. Let the *Aged* Pray much, becauſe they have but a *Little Time*, till their Mouths will be ſtopt: And *Cry mightily* to God, before they go down into the *Silence* of the *Grave*. Let them Beg of Him that *knows their Frame*, to have *Compaſſion on their Infirmities*, and not *Caſt them away in the time of their Old Age, nor Forſake them when their Strength fails them*. Let them go *Praying* out of this World, that they may come *Praiſing* into the Next.

Next. Let *Children* in their youth, Remember who *Made* them; and Pray That as they grow in *Age* and *Stature*, they may alſo grow in *Wiſdom, and Grace, and Favour with God and men.* Let them learn to Pray *Betimes*, that Uſe may get them a *Habit*, and facility of Praying. And if their Prayers be well meant, (tho *Childiſh*,) He will not Deſpiſe the *Young Childrens* Prayer, who gives even to the *Young Ravens* that *Cry.* Pſal. 147. 9. Let the *Weak* and craſy Pray, *for Power from on High*, to Him that giveth *Power to the Faint, and increaſeth Strength to them that have no Might.* And let the *Strong* and *Luſty*, Exert their Strength and mettle in this Spiritual *Conflict* and Struggle, and not be Slothful in the *Work of the Lord*, but do it *with all their might.* Becauſe they know not what *a Day may bring forth*, to Diſable and pull them down. Let the *Infirm* Chriſtians Pray to be *Healed*: and the *Fallen*, to be *Recovered*; the *Doubtful* and wavering, to have their *Faith increaſed:* And let the *Faithful* and eſtabliſhed Pray, That they may be *Thankful* to God, and *Helpful* to men, and go on to *Abound in the Work of the Lord.*

In a word, let men of all Ranks and Eſtates *Pray*, Becauſe they *May*, and becauſe they *Need* it. Becauſe they are Nothing, and Have nothing, but of the Divine *Bounty*: And can do nothing without God's Heavenly *Grace*, and are Preſumptuous to look for that Grace, without their

their *Prayers*. They deſerve to go for ever without it, and juſtly do periſh for *Want* of it, who will not be at ſo much trouble as to *Seek*, but Loſe all for want of *Asking*. All the Noiſe and Buſtle in this World, at the laſt, will *Centre* and be ſumm'd up in *Prayer*. And every one that is not Stupid or Mad, will covet to go *Praying* off the preſent *Stage*. Whatever elſe then a man has to do, he is but an impertinent *Trifler*, whoever he be, that doth not every day addict and uſe himſelf to this Service, to make one of the number of God's conſtant *Orators*.

SECT. II.

What Liberty have Sinners *to make their Prayers.*

THat *God Heareth not Sinners*, is true of all *Impenitent*, *Reſolved* Sinners, ſo perſiſting. For why ſhould he be at their beck, to Hear them calling upon Him for *Mercy*, who make no Conſcience to Hearken to Him, calling on them for *Duty*? *Quantum à præceptis, tantum ab Auribus Dei.* Tertul. *He that turneth away his ear from Hearing the Law, even his Prayer ſhall be Abomination*, Prov. 28. 9. More *Noiſom* to God, than any *Stinking* Breath to us. He will not Hear, when the *Hands are full of Blood*. They muſt be *Holy hands* lifted up, to fetch down *Heavenly* Bleſſings. Nor will he Hear when

when the Heart is full of *Pride*. Who is inclinable to Give to a *Proud Beggar*? Any allowed Wickedneſs bars againſt us the beſt and only *Refuge* in the world. When our *Hearts* Condemn us for *Regarding Iniquity* in them, it Damps our Spirits, and Confounds our Faces, and Blaſts all our Hopes of *Speeding*. The Prayer is like then to Return as void of *Succeſs*, as it went empty of *Sincerity*. For ſhould God Hear us, when we do not Hear our ſelves? Yea when we hear all his *Enemies* rather than Him? We muſt not think he is ſo obliged to our *Party*, or Charmed with our Forms of *Addreſs*; tho we may ſeem to Pray as we *Ought*, when we take no care to *Live* as we Pray.

And yet it cannot be meant of *Sinners* in general without Exception, That God will not *Hear them*; For then he muſt Hear never a *Servant* of his that he has upon *Earth*; ſeeing all the World ſtands *Guilty before him*: *And there is not a Juſt man upon earth, that doth Good, and Sinneth not.* Who are they but *Sinners* that he bids Pray every day, *Forgive us our Treſpaſſes*? He will *Forgive* many that know not how to *Forgive themſelves*: And *Hear* even ſuch as are ready to *Deſpair* of Audience. *Pſal.* 31. 22. *I ſaid in my haſt, I am cut off from before thine eyes: Neverthelеſs thou Heard'ſt the voice of my Supplications, when I cried unto thee.* How is it then? God will Hear ſome Sinners, and ſome he will not. *Preſumptuous Hardned* Sinners that *Go on ſtill in their Treſpaſſes*, He will not Hear,

Nor

Nor Regard their *Prayers*, who Regard not his *Word*; but make the Prayers only a *Cloak* for their Sins, inſtead of a *Mawl*, to break them off.

But *Repenting* and *Returning* Sinners ſhall not therefore fail of *Audience*, becauſe they fail in their *performance*: Nor be Denied every thing which they *Would*, Becauſe they diſcharge not every thing as they *Ought*. Tho we cannot ſay, *We have no Sin*, or are without offence; Yet if we *Fear* to offend, *He will Fulfil the deſire of them that Fear him.* Pſal. 145. 19. And tho we cannot make ſo ſtreight paths for our Feet, as never to tread *Awry*, Yet if, as to the main, we walk in the *Uprightneſs* of our Hearts: *No good thing will he withhold from them that walk Uprightly.* *Pſal.* 84. 11. Still there will be room enough left for his *Pardon*, even when we have done our *Beſt*: Yet will he not for that, ſtop his Ears, but *Hear in Heaven, and when he Hears Forgive.* *Elias*, I know was an Extraordinary Perſon, Tho the Apoſtle, tells us, he was (Ὁμοιοπαθὴς. *James* 5. 17.) *Paſſible as we are*: and that with Frailty of *Mind*, as well as *Body*: For ſo the Venerable *Bede* gloſſes upon it. (*Et mentis Fragilitate, & Carnis.*) Yet he Prayed, and was Heard in what he Asked.

Some *Inherent* Holineſs, indeed, we muſt have, to give us *Confidence towards God*, and to ſpeak our *Intereſt* in the Holy prevailing *Advocate.*

Advocate. Whatſoever we ask, we receive of Him, Becauſe we keep his Commands, and do thoſe things that are Pleaſing in his Sight, 1 Joh. 3. 22. Yet we cannot ground our Hopes all upon our own *Holineſs*: But muſt have a better *Name* and *Righteouſneſs* than any in ourſelves, wherewithal to *Appear before the Lord, and Bow our ſelves to the moſt High God.* And He upon whoſe *Intereſt* and *Mediation* we go, is pleas'd to call to Him the *Labouring and Heavy-Laden.* They that feel themſelves *Burthened* with their Sins, are the fitter to make their *Prayers.* The Senſe of Sin is both the *Weight* to Humble them, and alſo the *Goad* to Quicken them: That they may think *Ill* of themſelves, and be in good *Earneſt* with God. Prayer is the *Pillar of Smoak* in which the Soul aſcends out of this Wilderneſs, to God Above: Which tho it be *Black* as Smoak, for manifold *Infirmities* ſtill adhering, Yet having a Principle of *Energy* and *Spirit* to carry it upward, The Devout Soul aſcends therein, and by a humble *Familiarity* Converſes and Parlies with God, even as *Abraham* and *Moſes* did. Yea when our Sins are felt and Bewailed, we may draw even from them, a *Plea* why God ſhould Hear us, for his *Glory.* For that he ſhould Hear in Heaven, and do, and Grant the deſires of Sinful *Duſt and Aſhes*, who can claim nothing, as due, at his hands: That he ſhould Forgive us, who have ſo Provoked him, we deſerve rather to be *Abhorred* than *Pardoned*

Reward

Reward *Unprofitable Servants*, Yea Regard *Ill-deſerving Sinners!* O how much does this redound to the Honour of his *Name*, and illuſtrate his *Glory*? And what Encouragement have we, (even when Diſcouraged by our own Sinful Vileneſs,) to go and Strive and Plead with God in our Prayers, by the things which he moſt Prizes and Loves? That is, to Move him with his own *Glory*; to take the Motive from *Himſelf*, and to be Merciful to us *Sinners* for his *Names ſake*; And *Ariſe and Help and Deliver us for his Honour.*

What Mean then the *Faint Hands* and *Feeble Knees*, when the God ſo Greatly Offended, will be ſo *Eaſily* intreated? And expects not that we ſhould come to him without our *Sins*, But only with a Sorrowful *Concernment* for them, and a pious *Reſolution* againſt them. And ſo even *Fools corrected with their own Wickedneſs*, are *Heard*. Pſal. 107. 9. And the Wicked whoſe very Prayer is called *Abomination*, are yet put upon *Praying*, However they want Ability, they are not *Diſengaged*, from paying the Debt; becauſe that Inability is only thro their own *Fault*. And if they are Sinful, even in their Prayers, To leave them off, will not *Amend* the matter; but they would be yet more *Sinful*, without them. They may Pray and *Eſcape*, But if they Pray not, they are ſure to *Periſh*. And therefore St. *Peter* bid *Simon Magus* (who was in the *Gall of bitterneſs, and the Bonds of iniquity,*) *Repent and Pray God, if perhaps the*

thoughts

thoughts of his heart might be Forgiven him. Acts 8. 22, 23. If there be but any *Peradventure*, it is good to be *Adventurers* here. *Jehoahaz did Evil in the Sight of the Lord, and yet he Sought the Lord, and the Lord Hearkened to him.* 2 King. 13. 4. And what hath been, may be. As the Hand of God is not *Shortened*, So neither is his Mercy *Abated*, but ſtill they are the *Same*, as ever they were. And Praying, being the uſing of Gods *Means:* In that very *Uſe* both our Perſons and our Prayers may be *Sanctified.* But they that are not ſenſible enough of their *Adoption*, to cry, *Abba Father*, muſt yet repair to God, as the Common *Father of all*, for a better *Title:* and beg the Regenerating and Witneſſing Spirit of Him, as the faithful Creator, with whom the *Fatherleſs find Mercy.* And however Unworthy we are, *The Lord our Righteouſneſs*, who is Infinitely Worthy, *maketh interceſſion for the Tranſgreſſors.* Iſa. 53. laſt *v.* And his *Interceding* is not by way of *Petition*, but as an *Advocate*, Pleading for his Client, of *Juſtice*, Becauſe we have no Sins hanging upon us, but what he, to the full, has *Satisfied* for. And ſo they can be no *Bar* to our Prayers, when we are Intereſted in his *Merits.*

And thus the way to the Throne of Grace is *Open* to All manner of Perſons. And Sinners, even the *Worſt* are not *Excluded*, if they reſolve not to *Continue in their Sins*, but are on the Penitent *Key*, and on the Parting *Point.* *He that Confeſſeth and Forſaketh his Sins, ſhall have Mercy.* [To which I may add, He that Fears and

and Prays, ſhall not Feel what he Fears and Prays againſt. God will never condemn that earneſt Supplicant, who *Deprecates* the Evil which he dreads, and from a ſenſible Heart, thus pleads for the Life of his poor Soul, *From thy Wrath, and from Everlaſting Damnation, Good Lord deliver me. What profit is there in my Blood?* The Damned nothing but Blaſpheme and Curſe thee: O let me live, that I may Bleſs and Praiſe thy Name. Let none then Debar himſelf of the *Liberty*, which our *Lord Allows* us all. But may every one lay hold of the bleſſed *Priviledge*, and be a *Petitioner*, waiting on the *Lord our God*, till he anſwer him in the *Wiſhes* of his heart. And O that we might have that once to ſay of every *Unconverted Sinner*, which was given as an Argument of St. *Paul's* Converſion, Act. 9. 11. *Behold, he Prayeth.*

Lord I have Invited all,
And I ſhall
Still Invite, ſtill Call to Thee:
For it ſeems but juſt and right
In my ſight,
Where is All; there all ſhould be.

Herb.

CHAP. VI.

The Liberty of Prayer, as to the Perſons Prayed for.

SECT. I.

The Liberty of Praying For All.

OUR Bleſſed *Lord* in the firſt Word of his *Prayer*, teacheth us to Pray in *Love*, as well as in *Faith*: and to take in *Others* together with ourſelves. And here we are to go as *Wide*, as before. None is Debarred from *Praying*. And we muſt Leave out None, in our *Prayers*. If we do not ſtill *Name*, yet we muſt *Intend* them: And *Make Prayers and Interceſſions for All men.* 1 *Tim.* 2. 1 Not only men of all *Orders* and Sorts, but *All* the men of every order and ſort. Our Charity ſhould be as *Extenſive*, even as the whole Race of *Mankind*. Like *Fellow-Members* of the ſame Body, Every Member ſhould have the ſame care one of another.

We are not indeed to Pray for the *Dead*, whoſe *Parts* are done, and their *Final* Condition already *Determined*. And it is equally idle and Impertinent, to Pray for that which *Already is*, and that which *Never ſhall be*. That is, the Bliſs of thoſe that are *Bleſſed*, Or the Salvation of thoſe that are *Loſt*. Yet O how many

ſenſeleſs

ſenſeleſs *Maſſes* are poured out upon this Account, and ſpilt in the Air? (Only that the Loſs is not great, unleſs the *Stuffe* were more Precious:) by that *Church* which ſeems to have a great deal of *Leiſure*, and little to do, To beſtow ſo much Time, in Seeking *to Reverſe* what God hath already *Concluded*. But tho the *Dead* can receive no manner of Advantage from it, Yet (like ſome other Points of *Popery*) 'Tis too Gainful to the *Living*, eaſily to part with it. The Friends *Departed* Souls can have no Feeling out of it; but the Prieſts Living *Bodies* feel the Comfort. And where the *Pay* is ſo Good, they are not agrieved to ſpend ſo much Breath in thoſe kind of Prayers, that return in ſuch *Golden Showers*, into their own Boſoms. And ſo it is indeed a Praying for *Themſelves*, tho called Praying for *Others*.

But for the Salvation of all Men *Living*, we may Pray, becauſe we are not ſure but that all *Now Living* may be ſaved. They are *Probationers* and *Paſſengers*, upon their *Tryal*, and in the *Way*: *Candidates* of Happineſs, and Seeking for it: And as far as ever any are now from it, we do not know but before they Dye, they may be brought into a Capacity of it, and *Attain* to it. And the bare *Poſſibility* of the thing is Ground enough for our Prayers: Which being the Effects of our Chriſtian *Love*, and Charitable *Deſires*, We ſhall be the *Better* for theſe Prayers, tho every one whom we Comprehend in them, is not.

And this we may look upon as a good *Omen*, and happy *Preſage* of Reformation dawning, and a Bleſſed *Day* ready to break upon the *Church*, when Gods *Remembrancers* are Inſtant in Prayer, and Urgent, and Importunate with him for the *Transfuſing* of a *New Life* into the *Dead Bones*, and Recovering Decayed Piety into a more Healthy, Hearty, and Flouriſhing condition. And how far ſoever things are gone, and how little Hope ſoever ſeems to remain of *Retrieving* them, Yet it is not in Vain, but to very good Senſe, to *Remonſtrate*, and offer the Matter to Him, who *Quickens the Dead, and calleth thoſe things that are not, as if they were.* And who is pleas'd to make our Prayers the very *Condition* of his doing ſuch great things for his *Church*. How few ſoever then we have with us here, and how Improbable ſoever it may be thought ever to ſee the *Deformed* Face of this Ungodly World changed into the *Beauties of Holineſs*, Yet let us not be out of Heart, to Ask of Him, to whom *All things are Poſſible*; *Ariſe, O God, Plead thy own Cauſe.* That if all be not fully Accompliſhed ſtrait to our wiſhes, we may have, at leaſt, the ſatisfaction of ſeeing ſome Preparation and *Tendencies* towards the Long'd for *Revolution*; And the preſent evil World *Amended*, and Gods Truth and Holineſs getting *Ground* in it. And in this Praying, we may take Encouragement, and go on in Hope of *Prevailing*; becauſe it is for the thing which God himſelf Loves and Favours above

bove all, even His *Holineſs* and his *Honour*. Such are the Requeſts he looks moſt Graciouſly upon, and gives the beſt *Welcome* to them that come to his *Gates* upon this Errand; Not to crave the Pleaſures of the Fleſh, or the Greatneſs and Fullneſs of the World, But to beg *Grace* and *Godlineſs*, and to *Seek his Kingdom and the Righteouſneſs thereof*. When his Glory is next our Hearts, and we are not concerned only *To ſerve a Turn*, Or to ſave our *Stake*, or ſet up our *Intereſt* or *Party* in the World. But that the *Name* of God may not be Blaſphemed, nor his *Holy Cauſe* ſuffer, by the ungodly Oppoſers of it prevailing: That they may not be *Fluſht* with Succeſſes, to make them conclude themſelves in the *Right*: Nor be let alone to Exalt themſelves, and Ruine thoſe, to whom the World is moſt *Beholden*, for its Continuance: Nor have cauſe to ſay, They have *Prevailed againſt Gods People*. And tho we are ſo Unworthy, we cannot hope to be Heard upon our own Account, Yet may we Pray in Faith and comfortable Expectation, That God will do the thing for his *Name's Sake*, which he has no reaſon to do for *our Sakes*. When it is no other Cauſe but his *Own*, which we commend to his *Care*: That the *Cauſe* may not be ſpoiled for us *Sinners*: but that we *Sinners* may rather be *Spared* and *Preſerved*, becauſe we Profeſs the *Goſpel-Truth*, and ſtand up for *Pure Religion, and undefiled*, and *Proteſt* againſt the *Idolatries* and *Tyrannies*, and *Superſtitions*, and *Abominations*,

which a corrupt Set and *Faction* has Introduced, to *Adulterate* and defile it. With this *Suit* we may go boldly to the Throne of Grace, *Arise O God, let not Man prevail. How long shall the Wicked Triumph, and the Adversary Reproach? What wilt thou do unto thy great Name? O let the Wickedness of the Wicked come to an end, but Establish the Just. O Continue thy Loving-kindness to them that Know thee, and thy Righteousnnss to the Upright in heart. Wherefore should the Heathen say, Where is their God? Shew thy marvellous Loving-kindness, thou that saveſt by thy right hand, them that Trust in Thee, from those that rise up against them. Let all those that Seek thee Rejoyce and be glad in Thee: And let such as Love thy Salvation say continually, Let God be Magnified, who hath Pleasure in the Prosperity of his Servants. Return we beseech thee O God of Hosts, Look down from Heaven and behold, and Visit this Vine, and the Vineyard which thy Right hand hath planted, aad the Branch which thou madeſt strong for thy self. Arise and have mercy on* Zion. *And Redeem* Israel, *O God, out of all his Troubles.*

Thus *Large Souls* go big with the Care of all the *Churches*; Yea take in them that are *Without* too, and so help to *Bear up the Pillars* of the earth. This is that *Publick Spirit* which sets the Charitable good Man to Seek not only his own, but the Happiness of all the *World*. And how Large soever is the *Request*, he knows the *Power* to which he Addresses, is *Able* to effect

effectit: And thinks not he hath ſaid *Our Father*, as he ought, till he has Recommended the Wants and Diſtreſſes of all the Partakers of his *Nature*, to the Great *Parent* of the *Univerſe*. Thus he *Obliges* unknown Multitudes, that lye without all *Lines* of Communication, but that of his *Prayers*: And is Kind to mighty Numbers that never ſaw his *Face*, nor knew of *ſuch a one* in the World. Thus he Sayls and *Trafficks* for the *Publick Good*, not only to the Ends of the Earth, but quite up to the *Heavens*; And comes back fraught with the rich *Merchandize* of all Bleſſings from Above; to make all that dwell on this Mighty *Ball*, Gainers by his *Commerce* with that Kingdom, where all the *Treaſure* lyes.

Yea thus the pooreſt *Subject* may make his *King* and *Countrey* Beholden to him, for *Deprecating* Judgments; and Praying down Mercies upon the *Publick*. Thus the Supplicants that Wait upon Gods Throne, not only Deliver their *own Souls*, but help to Save *Nations*, 2 Chron. 7: 14. *If my People that are called by my Name, ſhall Humble themſelves and Pray, and ſeek my Face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I Hear from Heaven, and Forgive their Sins, and will Heal the Land.* Such a man the Lord ſought for, *Ezek.* 22. 30. *That ſhould make up the Hedge, and Stand in the Gap before him, for the Land: that he ſhould not Deſtroy it.* And becauſe he found none, (And then the Caſe is Sad indeed, when we are left to com-

plain, as Isai. 64. 11. *There is none that Calleth upon thy Name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of Thee.*) *Therefore he Pour'd out his Indignation, and Consumed them,* v 31. By which it appears, both how Acceptable such *Intercession* is to God. (He Seeks for the *Intercessor*, and does not Blame a *Poor Creature* for taking so much upon him:) And also how *Available* is the Righteous mans Prayer, not only for himself, but for all his *Neighbours* far and wide. *Elias*, (*the Chariot and Horsemen of* Israel) with the Opening of his Mouth, could *Shut* and *Open Heaven.* Jam. 5. 17, 18. And upon the earnest Intreaty of *Moses*, in behalf of a provoking People, 'Tis said, *Exod.* 32. 14. *The Lord Repented of the Evil, which he thought to do to his People.*

This is the best of all *Friendship* to our Friends, To be thus *Concerned* and *Imployed* for them. Yea thus we may do *Good* for *Evil*, to them that will not *Thank* us for it: *Praying for them that Despightfully use, and Persecute us:* And so lay up for ourselves better *Rewards* than their good *Words.* And thus we shall be the most Welcome *Physicians*, and dearest *Comforters* to the *Sick* and *Miserable*, and get them that Help from *Above*, which all the World cannot Give. In the failing of all other *Means*, thus we may *Engage* Him to come in to their Succour, that *Knows how to Deliver*, and is never at a Loss, to do *whatever he pleases in Heaven and in Earth.*

Such

Such a *Latitude* and Liberty is allowed to our Prayers, even as Wide as the *World*. So eaſie may we take in *All* with our ſelves: and in ſo doing, *Benefit* them, without *Impoveriſhing* our ſelves. For he whom we Pray to hath Infinitely more than to Supply us all. And if there were Thouſands of *Millions* more to be Saved, *Heaven* would be as much to them *every One*, as if each had *All* to Himſelf. This is the true *Chriſtian Spirit*, Not only to *Pray for the Peace of Jeruſalem*, but to Seek the *Enlargement* of Chriſt's Kingdom, and to Pray that it may *Come*, in the Beſt and Fulleſt ſenſe.

But ſuch as glory moſt in the big *Catholick* Name, yet ſhew the *Leaſt* and *Narroweſt* Souls, in *Confining* Salvation only to their own *Sect*. And inſtead of Praying for their Neighbours, *Curſing* and *Damning* all the *World* beſide themſelves. Wherein the *Papiſts* are even with the Profane Hectoring *Ruffians*, who have no Prayer ſo common, as, *God Damn ye*. But for ought I know, the *Curſes* are as good as the *Prayers* of ſuch an *Unchriſtian Church* and *Spurious Mother*, that is all for *Dividing the Child*, and *Deſtroying* the Lives and Souls, which Chriſt came to *Save*. Yet however they *Curſe*, Let us *Pray*; Firſt for our ſelves, That we may be *Saved* from them, and not be *Like* them: And then for Them, That they may once get from under the *Yoke* of their wilful *Bondage*, ſo contrary to the *Liberty* of the *Goſpel*, wherein *Chriſt* hath ſet us *Free*: And not be ſo *Stingy* and

Penurious

Penurious in their Charity, but let the *Damning* alone, for their own *Sakes*, as well as ours: Leſt, as they *Judge*, they find the Judgment turned againſt *themſelves*, by Him to whom *Vengeance* and the Pronouncing of Final *Sentences* belongs.

SECT. II.

The Liberty of Praying for Wicked *Men.*

THE *Lord of Love*, who Breath'd out his *Soul* in Praying for the cruel Enemies, that ſhed his *Blood*, Yet held back his *Prayers* for many, that ſeem'd as much to *Need* them. Joh. 17. 9. *I Pray not for the World*, ſaith He, That is, The World, as oppoſed to them whom the *Father Gave him out of the World.* And ſo far we are to be *Followers of Chriſt* herein, as not to Pray for Pardon and Heaven, to the *Impenitent* and *Unbelieving*, ſo *Continuing*: Nor to ask for them thoſe ſame things which belong only to the *Elect* and dear Children of God. But yet we muſt not *Exclude* all out of our *Offices*, whom God hath Excluded the *Book of Life.* Tho *Chriſt* might, Becauſe he Knew who they were, but we do not. And all the Pſalmiſts *Imprecations* againſt his, and Gods Enemies, (If we read them in the *Imperative Mood*, which the *Learned* obſerve may be read in the *Indicative*: and then they are *Predictions* of what ſhould Befall them, and not

Prayers

Prayers for ſuch *Curſes* to light upon them;) They are no Rules to us, becauſe we have not the *Spirit of Propheſy*, as that Eminent Servant of God had, to *Foreſee the End of ſuch men.* The like may be ſaid of St. *Paul's Imprecation* on *Alexander*, 2 Tim. 4. 14. *The Lord Reward him, according to his Works.* Dr. *Hammond* ſays, the beſt *Manuſcripts* read (Ἀποδώσει) The Lord *Will Reward* him. And ſo the *Syriack* and St. *Aug.* according to *Eſtius.* And if otherwiſe, Then it was a *Denouncing* of God's righteous *Judgments* upon an *Incorrigible* Offendor, in a Notorious caſe, of which the *Apoſtle* had Aſſurance. And till we can attain to the like *Knowledge* of any, We muſt be *Cautious* how we make ſo Bold. *If any man ſee his Brother Sin a Sin which is not unto Death, He ſhall ask, and he ſhall give him Life for them that Sin not unto death. There is a Sin unto Death, I do not ſay that he ſhall Pray for it.* 1 Joh. 5. 16. This looks like a *Prohibition* of our Prayers for ſome *Sinners.* And ſure we are not to ask God's *Pardon* for any *Impenitent* Sinner, ſo *Perſiſting.* But upon Condition of that *Repentance*, which we are to Pray, that God would *give them.* Nor ſhould we be unkind to Ungodly men, did we Pray, That they might find ſuch *Shame* and *Affliction*, as God knows Conducing to their *Converſion.* The ſeeming *Bad Wiſh*, is the *Happieſt* thing that could befall them: And that *Evil day* would be the *Beſt Day* that ever came over them. But tho we are not to ask God's Pardon for ſuch as finally

finally *Perſiſt* to Sin, in *Deſpight of the Spirit of Grace*, and without Repentance; if ſo be, that we *Know it*: (For that were to ask what his Word aſſures us, ſhall never be:) Yet where we cannot Know this without *Revelation*, We had need be *Wary*. And better far to Err in the *charitable Extream*, than in the other. All Sin in its own Nature is *Deadly*. But yet all that is *Mortal* doth not *Kill*, thro the *Divine Mercy*: And it proves *Not unto Death*, thro *Chriſt's Remedy*. No Sin ſo *Deadly*, but ſhall be Pardoned to the *Penitent*. And therefore we muſt Pray for all as *Pardonable*, till we are ſure of the *Contrary*, as to any. Our raſh *Cenſoriouſneſs* may as much *Wrong* others, as *Harm* ourſelves. But our kind Prayers, even for ſuch as they can do no *Good*, yet will do us no *Hurt*. Yea we ſhall be the *Better* for our *Charity*, tho they be never the Better for it, Thro a *Bar* which themſelves put in the *Way*. Let us not then ſcruple to Extend our *Litany* as far as ever there is a man *Alive* to receive the *Benefit*, Beſeeching the Good Lord, *That it would pleaſe him to have Mercy upon All men.*

The Cloſe *of the Firſt Part, Juſtifying the Liberty pleaded for.*

THUS for the *Matter* and *Manner*, *Time*, *Place*, and *Perſons*, we are at *Liberty* for Prayer.

Prayer. Not tied up, to move only as *Puppets* in a Frame: but may walk at Large, as the *Lord's Free men.* Let *Papists* call us *Libertines*, becauſe we challenge a Share in our Bleſſed *Saviour's* Purchaſe made for us. We are not at Liberty, ſo to Part with our *Liberty.* But muſt rather *Reſiſt unto Blood*, than make ourſelves *Underlings* to Unreaſonable and Cruel men: Such as would bind us, under pain of *Damnation*, As to Believe all that their *Church Says*, So to do all, as their *Church Requires*; tho God's Word, as well as our own Reaſon, tell us we are *Miſled.* Thoſe of a *Bigotted* Humor, void of the truly Pious Temper, ſhew little or no Religion, but in the blind, Hair-brain'd *Hectoring* for the Shells and Shadows of Religion: For that *Formal* Religion which at beſt is but like the fine *Birds Skin ſtuffed*, without any *Life* in it. When as indeed the Heavenly Beauty of Religion is *Within*, however the Outward Dreſs is not to be Wild and *Slattering*: Yet it muſt not be ſo *Strait lac'd*, to bind and Fetter us, inſtead of *Expediting* our Motions, in Drawing nigh to God.

It is not *Chriſtianity* but *Bigottery*, to Neglect the moſt *Weighty* things of God's Law, as if *Indifferent*: And the while to Plead for things *Indifferent*, as *All in All.* Like thoſe whom *Socrates* the Hiſtorian tells us of, that held *Fornication* a thing Indifferent, But Tugg'd for a *Holy-day*, as if their *Lives* had lain upon it. Our hearts may *Lib 5. c. 21.*

be

be *Free*, in ſpight of all *Aſſuming* Powers in the World. Nor need we ſo much Perplex our Conſciences about the *Ritual Religion* : As if by *Strictneſs* in ſuch Leſſer matters, we thought to *Compound* for our Careleſneſs in the *One thing Neceſſary*. Never muſt we ſet any *Humane* Laws, to *Rival* and Top the *Divine*.

Tho Submiſſion to Juſt *Authority* in all Lawful things, is no *Infringement* of our *Chriſtian Liberty*: Which we are not ſo to Dote upon neither, as if we thought even our own Cloaths *Abridg'd* it : But may preſerve it ſtill Good and fair to *Ourſelves*, even then when Prudence holds us in, from Flouriſhing with it *Before men*. As long as we do not tie up ourſelves to the Obſervation of *Humane Inſtitutions*, as things in themſelves *Abſolutely Neceſſary*, We may obey for *Conſcience Sake*, and yet keep our Conſciences as Free in the *Sight of God*, as if we did none of the things Preſcribed by men. While we make them no Parts of our *Religion*, nor believe them Neceſſary to *Salvation*. And yet thô we know the things to be *Indifferent*, we look not upon our *Obedience* as Indifferent; when as nothing is *Commanded*, contrary to what *God* has Commanded. And being thus Right in our Opinion and Apprehenſion of things, and not Slaves to our own *Conceits*, We are at Liberty ſtill *Enjoyed* to ourſelves, for all our Deference to *Eccleſiaſtical* Appointments for *Decorum* and *Order* in the *Church*. Our *Thoughts* and *Judgment* are Free, even when our Practice is under ſome *Reſtraints*.

Reſtraint. And thô we do the *ſame things* as others, It is at our Liberty whether it ſhall be with the *ſame Mind.* None can hinder, but we may *Think* as we pleaſe.

Now in all this my Endeavour has been to *Open* and *Smooth* the way to the *Throne of Grace.* That no Well-diſpoſed Pious Soul may be diſcouraged in its Approaches to that *Sweet Retreat,* but find all Encouragement, Freely and Cheerfully to *Draw Nigh to God,* without a *Servile Dread*: Diſcharged from thoſe fluctuating *Doubts,* and Entangling *Conceits,* wherewith ſo many are turmoil'd and kept *under Hatches,* even all their days, To *Interrupt* them in the courſe of their *Religion,* to make their Offices their *Torment,* to diſturb the *Serenity* and Quiet of their Minds, and to ſpoil all the Comfort and Sweetneſs of their *Devotion.* While they drag on ſo *Heavily,* as Strangers to the *Spirit of Adoption,* and have a Hundred *Rubs* and *Frights* in the way. When as their *Prayers* ſhould be their *Free-will Offering,* and the *Feſtival* Entertainment of their Lives, and their Souls ſhould run as *oiled Wheels,* upon the leaſt Touch of God's *Attraction,* when he Moves them to *Seek his Face.* For tho' he *Draws,* he doth not *Drag,* but (βελόμενον ἕλκει. Chryſ.) Carries ſuch along, as are Willing to *Run after him,* and do *Give themſelves to Prayer,* Not as *Compell'd,* but in Love to the Work, and *Delighting to do the will of God.*

The End of the Firſt Part.

THE LIBERTY OF PRAYER, Guarded from *LICENTIOUSNESS.*

PART. II.

[*Si de Veritate Scandalum ſumitur, utilius Scandalum naſci permittitur, quàm Veritas relinquatur. Greg in Ez.*]

PART. II.

The TRANSITION,

To obviate Bigots, and prevent Miſtakes.

I have offered to the Worſhippers of God all the *Liberty* that can reaſonably be Deſired: And yet no more than I take the *Goſpel* of our Lord to have *Given* and *Granted*. No more than the *Liberty of the children of God*, Who are to move Freely, as an Ingenuous Generation, and a *Willing People*: and not to be hamper'd like *Slaves*, under the *Yoke of Bondage*.

But from men of *Narrow Souls* and Stingy Principles, (that are under the power of falſe Notions, and bound up in *Superſtitious* Fetters,) I expect hideous *Outcries*, of *Looſe* Doctrine, and a door opened to all *Abomination*. I hear and Smile, when I know ſome of the great *Libertines* in Practice, to be the moſt Nice and *Straight-lac'd* men, for certain Modes and Opinions. They can make bold to take all *Looſe Liberties* in their Converſation and Manners, and go ſo far this way, that they muſt be men of *Large Conſciences* indeed, and have as Little of God's holy *Fear*, that dare venture

to *Follow* them. And yet at the ſame time, and in the midſt of all their *Rants* and Exceſſes, who more haſty to find great fault with much *Better* than themſelves? And make heavy Complaints and *Tragical* Exclamations of the inſufferable Boldneſs and *Laxity* of all that are not ſuch high *Obſervers* of Times and Places, Words and Forms, Geſtures and Cuſtoms, as themſelves, Nor jog along juſt in their very *Mode*. As if every one had loſt his way, and none could poſſibly be *Saved*, that did not exactly *like* them. Whereas, God help them that *do*. And how much worſe and ſadder would it be with the World, than it is, if we had no better *Patterns*?

But what then? Is it come to this paſs for *Tolerations*, That men may Pray or *Forbear*? Or do it *When* their liſt, or *How* their Liſt? and never trouble their Heads about the matter, nor have any care in their Hearts, either to diſcharge the *Duty* at all, or to do it in an *Acceptable* manner? God forbid! Tho' we propoſe an *Inch*, where ſome will allow no more than a *Hairs breadth*: Yet that none may take the *Ell*, when but an Inch is given, That the *Large* Bounds may not be ſhamefully Stretcht into a *Boundleſs* Extravagance: We muſt throw ſome checks and *Limitations* in the way of Looſe and careleſs Sinners: To teach them how to behave themſelves as *Free*, without abuſing their Liberty for a *Cloak* of ſuch Naughtineſs. And as we have ſhewed how far it is that they *may*

go,

go, So we are now to tell them, Where they muſt ſtop and *Go no further.*

CHAP. I.

SECT. I.

The Licentiouſneſs Not to Pray at all.

NOT only the Command of God, but the Neceſſity of our caſe, puts us upon *Prayer.* And there is ſo much Good to be got by it, that we are the worſt Enemies to ourſelves, when we Neglect it. Yea we betray ourſelves to be *Baſtards* and not *Sons*, when we do not *Give ourſelves unto Prayer.* For God hath never a *Dumb* Child in his Family. Tho' all are not alike Accompliſhed, the leaſt knows how to cry *Abba Father.* As the ſillieſt Beggar knows how to tell his own Tale, to move Pity, and get a Peny. As ſoon as St. *Paul* was a Convert, he was a *Supplicant.* Act. 9. 11. And all God's People are called *The Generation of them that Seek him.* Pſal. 24. 6. Yea even ſuch as we condemn for *Falſe Worſhip*, will riſe up in Judgment, to condemn the *Neglecters* of all Worſhip. Whoſe own *Hearts* indeed cannot chuſe but aforehand Condemn them, if they have any Life and Senſe in them, and are not ſuch as the Apoſtle calls *Paſt Feeling.* But Some think to Have all, and

Do nothing. They would be *Chriſtians*, no one knows how. They would *Fly* without *Wings*, attain the *End*, without *Means*, *Enter the Straight Gate*, without *Striving*, Convey themſelves whether they pleaſe, and never Travail. And ſo *Condemn the Generation of God's Children*, for Spending their Strength *For Nought*, and Labouring all in Vain. *Wherefore is all this Waſt*? What need ſo much adoe? To Read, and Hear, and Muſe, and Watch, and Faſt, and Pray, and Mortify our Luſts, and Deny ourſelves, and *Work out our Salvation with Fear and Trembling*? But ſuch Deſpiſers of all Religious Offices, as reckon themſelves the brave Folks, ſo much *Aforehand* with the holy Followers of *Jeſus*, and make but a *Game* of their ſerious Diligence, will once ſadly wiſh they had born them Company, and find their *Miſtake*, when it may be too Late for *Remedy*. When their *Short Cuts* have left them Short of *Heeven*, they find what they counted the *Round-about way*, was the Next and Beſt, and Only Way to the Bleſſed *Home*. For this World is made for *Buſineſs*, and here we muſt Labour, if hereafter we would Enter into that *Reſt* which *Remains for the People of God*. This way all ſuch as *Dyed in the Lord* went thither. But what ſhould they make account to *Reſt from their Labours*, who were never us'd to *Watch unto Prayer*, nor to *Strive*, and take any *Pains* in it? As Buiſy as ever they might be otherwiſe, *Labouring for the Meat that Periſheth*, will not ſerve

ſerve the turn, to bring men to *Everlaſting Life*. *One thing is Needful*, And the main of it lies in *Prayer*. For we cannot do what we ſhould without God's *Grace*, and he will not give it, without our *Prayers*. Still we are bent to *Backſliding* from Him, and Prayer *Retrieves* and fetches us back to Him. Natural Corruption is the Dead *Weight*, ſtill pulling down the Heart to the *Duſt of the Earth*: But our Praying is like Winding up the *Clock*, to ſet and keep it going. This then muſt be the conſtant Imployment of our Lives: and we can never do well without it: Our caſe is ſo far from Hopeful, when we have thrown off the Care, and loſt the Conſcience of it. Thô there ſhould be nothing ſcandalous upon our Names, Yet the very *Withholding* of Prayer is enough to Undoe us: And this it ſelf is a dreadful Prognoſtick of Ruine, When we have not Power or Heart ſo much as to Cry for Deliverance from the *Wrath to Come* Horrible is like to be the End of the *Prayerleſs* generation. Such as will not Call upon God in the *Day of Grace*, they ſhall in vain Cry to him in the *Day of Wrath*: and find him then as *Deaf* to them, as before they were *Dumb* to Him: Never offering any hearty Supplication to God, till juſt he came to do Execution upon them.

SECT. II.

Of ſuch as Withhold Prayer out of Perverſeneſs.

IT ſpeaks the *Excellency* of Prayer, That the *Devil* has ſo many Fetches to keep People from their *Prayers*. He knows them to be the grand *Battery* againſt all *Infernal Powers*, That when we turn from him, to Fly this way to *God*, we get out of his Reach, aud he can do us no *Hurt*. Therefore if he could poſſibly by any means, he would *Hinder* our Prayers. 'Tis he that ſets men Perverſely to *Cavil* themſelves out of the greateſt *Priviledge* in the World, By *Sophiſms* and *Fallacies* drawn from the immutable *Decrees* of God, and the *Vanity* of Opening our caſe before Him, who *Knows* all better than we can tell him, and who lets them fare as well at his *Hands*, who uſe *No Prayers*, as thoſe that daily load his *Altars*.

It's true, God is the *Lord that Changeth not*: but will do all his *Pleaſure*, However we Wiſh this and that, according to *Humane Affections*: And the deſign of our Prayers, is not to make an *Alteration* in Him, but in ourſelves: Not to *Incline* him to our *Intereſts*, but to bring us to his *Terms*. When our Boat is faſtned at the Rope's end to the Bank, we cannot (by pulling never ſo hard,) make the Shore ſtir to come to us; but we may by that means, bring our *Boat*

to

to the *Shore.* And that is enough: We have our Deſign, if they come *Together.* We can never *Alter* the Eternal Purpoſe of God, with all our *Prayers.* But yet in the uſe of his *Means*, we may bring about our Salvation, *According* to his Purpoſe. For he hath Appointed none to the *End*, without the uſe of *Means* to bring them thither. And if thou wouldeſt find that thou art in a good *Hopefulneſs* for the End, Thou maiſt make out that, by a Seaſonable and Earneſt *Application* of the Means. Thou canſt not be of God's *Council*, Yet be ſure, it is to ſome purpoſe for thee to *Obey* his Commands. He *Commands* thee to Pray, And thou maiſt be Confident, He would never Enjoin an *Impertinent* thing. He would never bid thee *Ask*, *Seek*, *Knock*, if it Signified nothing at all for thee to do ſo.

We are told of ſome Doctrines that ſpoil all *Preaching*, and of ſome that deſtroy all *Praying.* ('Tis eaſy indeed for a man of Wit, to Load with *Abſurdities*, any Doctrine he is *Prejudic'd* againſt.) But were it ſo, that I muſt needs adhere to the one or the other, For my part, I ſhould rather chuſe the Doctrines that *Enervate Sermons*, and Stain the Pride of man's Glory, Than thoſe that *Vacate Prayers*, and cloud the glory of that *Grace* by which we are *Saved*: and that not of *Ourſelves*, it being the *Gift of God.* And herein I am proud to agree with our ſweet and Excellent *Poet*, where he thus declares,

——— *I value Prayer ſo,*
That were I to leave all but One,
Wealth, Fame, Endowments, Vertues, all ſhould go,
I and dear Prayer would together dwell,
And for each Inch loſt, quickly gain an Ell.
Herb.

But St. *Paul*, that zealous *Aſſertor* of God's Free Grace, (*Gratiæ Specialis Pugil.* Bradward.) did not think it an *idle* Exhortation, when he call'd on his People, To *Work out their own Salvation with Fear and Trembling*; Thô at the ſame time he told them, It was *God that work't in them to Will and to Do, of his good Pleaſure.* Indeed, if I muſt ſpeak my own Senſe, I cannot but think my ſelf the more *Concerned* to live and keep in his holy Fear, when I believe all that ever concerns me, lies in his All-diſpoſing *Hands.* And I count it to very great and good Purpoſe, to Beg hard of Him for his Gracious *Aids*, without whom *I can do Nothing.* I ſhall leave them who think nothing is to be Askt, which is given *Abſolutely*, by vertue of God's *Decree*, to conſider what room they leave for their Prayers: When as themſelves hold, That God has Abſolutely *Determined* to give to every one Grace *Sufficient* to Believe, and upon their Believing, to Endure to the end and be Saved: And that beyond this Sufficient Grace, Nothing is to be *Sought of God*, only they are to exert the Power

Power received, and to *Stir up the Grace of God that is in them.* And ſo according to their own declared *Sentiments* in this matter, What ſhould they *Beg* for that, which they believe is *Antecedently* Secured to them?

Again, I grant, that *God knows* the whole of the Caſe, and how every thing is with thee, Better than thou canſt tell him. But then thou art to remember, That the end of thy Praying is not to *Inform* God of what he does not Underſtand: but to Diſpoſe and *Qualify* thee to receive what he has promiſed to *Give*: To perform the *Condition*, on thy part to be performed, To Humble thy Soul, and Raiſe up thy Heart, and Enflame thy Affections, and *Open thy Month wide, that he may fill it.* The Promiſe is, *Mat. 5.6. Bleſſed are they that Hunger and Thirſt after Righteouſneſs, for they ſhall be filled.* Now thy fervent Praying argues ſuch *Hungering and Thirſting*, and ſo prepares thee for the Mercy, *Entitles* thee to it, and tends to *Aſſure* thee of it. But it is a *Tempting of the Lord thy God*, to expect his *Immediate Aids*, without thy uſe of his *Means.* And what if the Deſpiſer of *Prayer* enjoy the *Fulneſs of the World*, and live in all Pomp and pleaſure and Proſperity? And the looſe *Dives*, that Worſhips no God, but his *Fortune* and his *Belly*, is aforehand with many of God's daily *Orators*, for the Sweet and Brave *Accommodations* of this Life? Be ſure, *The World's Good* ſhall never do them any *Good*, who Snatch it without God's *Leave*, and devour his Comforts, without

without Asking his *Bleſſing*. For the Creatures are *Sanctified by the Word of God and Prayer*. And the very Bleſſings are *Curſed*, to them that have them, without *Calling upon the Lord* for them. Who have them on eaſier terms, than the *Expence* of their Prayers, Or at leaſt, do not ſo *Sanctify* them upon the Receit, ſhall have ſmall *Joy* of them; but will find them inſtead of Proſperous Gifts, only *Temptations* and *Snares*. Better indeed Ask and not Receive, than Receive and not Ask. For Prayer coming between our Neceſſity and God's Bounty, keeps the good Underſtanding, and fair *Correſpondence* between us and Heaven, which is an Advantage of the higheſt conſideration. But then for the *Better things that Accompany Salvation*, (which are the *Childrens Bread*,) we muſt never expect them, till, we are qualified as Children, going to our *Father* for them. St. *Paul* calls *Iſaiah* very *Bold*, to ſay, the *Lord was found of them that Sought him not*. Rom. 10. 20. However *Liberal* He is, to Beſtow ſuch Favours, Yet he is not *Prodigal*, to throw them away upon ſuch as count them not worth ſo much as the *Asking for*. We ſhall not be *Saved*, if not *Sanctified*; Nor can we be Sanctified, without the *Spirit of God*; nor are we to look for that *Spirit*, without our *Asking*. Luk. 11. 13. 'Tis not to ſuch as Slight him, but to them which *Ask Him*, That God will *Give the Holy Spirit*.

SECT.

SECT. 3.

Of Deſpiſing Prayer, out of Profaneneſs.

THO' men of the beſt Rank are ambitious to attend in the *Kings Preſence*, and much greater Honour it is to attend upon the *moſt High God*: Yet there are men too high to *Stoop* even to Him that *Made* them; and who ſcarce meddle with *his Name*, unleſs it be in their *Oaths*, and to Droll upon his *Word*, and Scoff at his *Holy things*. They know not how to Worſhip and Pray, and *Call on the Name of the Lord*: But they know how to Curſe and Swear and *Blaſpheme* that *bleſſed Name*, by which they are called. *Vile Bruits*! that never Look up to the *Hand* from whence they Receive all: but go to and from their *Tables*, as their *Troughs*; and in and out of their *Beds*, as their *Sties*; without Asking of *God's* Leave, or taking any Notice of their great *Owner* and *Preſerver*. So *Good Fellows*, that they will not break Company, and go *Apart*, thô it be to Seek the Face of the *Lord*, and to Enjoy *God* Himſelf. Their ungodly Living takes them off *Praying*, or elſe the Praying would take them off ſuch kind of *Living*. Alas, what ſhould they do with Him, who (they know) Hates all ſuch *Workers of Iniquity*? He is out with them, and they care not then for Drawing Nigh to Him. Men Eſtranged from God

are

are not for ſuch kind of Company, as *Fellowſhip with the Father, and his Son Jeſus Chriſt.* For it is *Likeneſs* that breeds the endearing *Friendſhip*: But *what Communion hath Light with Darkneſs?* Where there is not firſt a *State of Nearneſs*, there are not to be expected any *Acts of Approximation.* Thoſe Ordinances of Worſhip which are *Breaſts* of Conſolation to others, are but dry empty *Shells* to them. They find no Savour of Sweetneſs in 'em. And ſo all we muſt look to hear from ſuch, is to have them Scorn and *Deride*, what themſelves could never *Reliſh* or Endure. You ſhall hear from them, *Preciſe* or *Factious*, or ſome ſuch Name of Infamy, if the *Slighty* way which moſt take up with, will not ſerve your turn. You ſhall be noted in the *Black Book*, or the *Black Mouth* of the Profane, for an *Intolerable Sort*, if you Dare not be *Like* them; but are for *Walking with* God, when they fly out all upon the *Ramble* of their Luſts. But if you muſt (after your *Saviour* himſelf,) bear the *Contradiction of Sinners*, You may Rejoyce it is upon ſo Good an account: If the main Objection againſt you, be your *Religion*, if you are Bark't at, for *Following God as dear Children*, and diſturb'd in the very Way which his *Word* puts you upon, The Quarrel then is *His*, rather than yours: And when He is ſo Able to Maintain his own *Cauſe*, and to Avenge the Affronts, and make the *Deſpiſers Behold and wonder, and Periſh*, You may Scorn their

their Scorns, and Pity their *Malignity*: Understanding the *End* of these men, who *thro' the Pride of their countenance, will not Seek after God*: Who will one day Curse themselves and their *Stiffness*, and the time wherein they made so *Bold* with the Eternal Almighty *Majesty*, and still kept off from Him, and even set him at *Defyance*, and made a *Pish* and *Mock* at his Humble Service. God will hereafter be Ashamed of such impudent *Pretenders* to be Christians, as were now Ashamed, not of their *Sins*, but of their *Prayers*, and his *Worship*.

SECT. IV.

Of Neglecting Prayer, out of Laziness.

MEN may not be so far gone in Ungodliness, as to *Cavil* against Prayer, nor openly *Affront* it: and yet take little or no Care duely to *Perform* it: Knowing nothing what belongs to Prayer, any further than now and then, to run over some *Forms* of course. And care not for any thing at all to do with it, but just to perform the *Custom*. Yet if they be not grossly Scandalous and Notorious, they think themselves Well enough to pass, tho' they make no Conscience to live, in a manner without *Prayer*. But to talk of a good Christian, not *Given to Prayer*, You may as well tell me of one living in good *Health*, without the use of *Food*. They that do not *Under-*

stand

ſtand and Seek after God, Underſtand nothing at all, to do their Souls any *Good*. Let Men be what they will in other reſpects, it *Blaſts* all the reſt, and makes them ſtark naught, to be *Prayerleſs*. This the *Pſalmiſt* makes the *Upſhot* of all Baſeneſs and Wickedneſs in the Worſt of men, *They Call not upon the Lord*. Pſal. 14. 4. And no wonder if God Leave them over to *themſelves*, that ſo love to Live *Without Him in the World*. They are like to be *Baniſht* for ever from him in the next World, who ſo little uſe or mind to Seek his *Face*, or come a near him, in this. Who think we muſt *Preach* them into Heaven, when they are ſo *Lazy*, they will not open their mouths to *Beg* for it. But alas, all *Sermons* are loſt upon you, that do not bring you upon your *Knees*. The Word will avail nothing to ſound in your *Ears*, if you do not Pray it home upon your *Hearts*. The deſign of Preaching is to make you know your *Wants*, and where you are to be Suppli'd, and to direct you to the rich *Store-houſe* of all manner of Bleſſings, which Prayer is the *Key* to open. Preachers Unfold and apply the Word, to ſhew you your Duty, and to quicken you to it, and to ſend you unto God, to *Pray* for his *Grace*, to Enable you to perform it. You are early inſtructed in the Church Catechiſm, to *Know this, That you are not Able of Your ſelves to do thoſe things*, which are the ſeveral parts of your Duty to God and Man, *nor to walk in the Commands*

Commands of God, and to serve him, without his special Grace, which you must therefore learn at all times, to Call for by diligent Prayer. And if you take not this Course, you must needs have wretched, Lean, and Starved *Souls*. When as you cannot do the things that please *God*, without his *Help*, and he will not so Help you, without your *Prayers*. And O Good God! what will such do, when thou shalt *Visit!* Now they may Pray, and *will not*. And in the time of their Extremity, tho' they would Pray, they *Cannot*. Either they lye then *Stupid Lumps* of Flesh, Insensible of their Case, not seeing how Dangerous and doleful it is with them: Or when *Distress and Anguish comes upon them*, to awaken and rouze them, and make them cry out for Help, They may justly fear to be put off, and Rejected of the *Lord*, according to his Threat. *Prov.* 1. 28. and to have not only their *Prayers Despised*, bur their *Souls Abhorred*.

On the other side, Nothing is so Influential to make us Wise and Good, and Great with *God*, as our daily Corresponding with Him, who is *Infinite Wisdom*, and the *Chiefest Good*. Such a holy *Habit* of Worship and Prayer dresses us up for Glory everlasting, where we shall *Adore* the most *Blessed* Eternally. For this Life is as our *Apprentice-ship*, to Learn our Trades, and train us up, to bear a Part with all the *Heavenly Host*. And Prayer

is Sweetneſs all the way, and Heaven at the End. O little do they know, who are Unacquainted with it, what *Joys* they Loſe, in keeping off from Him, in whoſe Preſence is *Fulneſs of Joy*. Facility comes by *Exerciſe*, and the Sweetneſs is found by *Experience*. So that what was at firſt a *Task*, after becomes the *Delight*. And pious Souls would not be debarr'd of the *Priviledge*, for more than all this World has to Tempt them with. I conclude this with that of Biſhop *Taylor*, *Sad is the condition of him that cannot Pray, Happy are they that can, and do, and Love to do it.*

CHAP. II.

Of not Praying in the Places *meet for Prayer.*

SECT. I.

Of not Praying at the Church.

MUſick in *Conſort*, with the combined has a prevailing Influence: and *Joynt* Prayers by their United force, are like to be moſt Moving and Effectual. To have gone with the *Multitude* to the *Houſe of God*, was the thing which *David pour'd out his Soul in him* to Remember, when he was detained from *Zion*, and

and could not as formerly, Visit the *Assembly* of God's Worshippers. He Envied the very *Birds* of the Air, as enjoying a greater Priviledge than himself could be master of: The *Sparrow* and the *Swallow* that nestled under the *Sanctuary*; while he, as a widowed *Turtle*, sate Mourning in the *Solitary* places. *My Soul Longs, yea even Faints*, says he, *for the Courts of the Lord. Blessed are they that dwell in thy House, they will be still Praising thee. A Day in thy Courts is better than a Thousand.* Psal. 84. 2, 4, 10. For this he so passionatly Longed, To *Come and Appear before God.* Psal. 42. 2. This he so earnestly Begg'd of the Lord, Psal. 43. 3. *O send out thy Light and thy Truth, Let them Lead me, Let them bring me to thy holy Hill, and to thy Tabernacles.* This was the *One thing* he desired of the Lord, and resolved to Seek after, *That he might dwell in the House of the Lord all the days of his Life: to behold the Beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his Temple.* Psal. 27. 4. But now alas, where shall we find such *A man after God's Heart?* How few such *Flaming Lights* in these last days, to warm the World into better *Devotion!* Our *Church doors* are Open, but the Doors of Mens *Hearts* are *Shut.* God Bows his Heavens and comes *Down*, But they have somewhat else to do, than give him the *Meeting.* A *Friend* to be Entertained at *Home*, must excuse them, for Attending upon the Lord at *Church.* A little *Storm* of foul Weather, can soon Cool all their *Zeal.* Or

the very conceit of a ſmall *Journey*, quite *Tire* out their *Devotion*. The pooreſt *Trifles*, their very Fancies and Petts, as well as Pleaſures, ſhall ſerve turn to ſtop them from the *Church*, that would not be Enough to keep them from a worſe place. O how Small a matter will turn ſuch *Queaſie* Stomachs againſt the *Food* of their Souls, which they have ſo little Love for? And they that are moſt *Behind hand* in their Souls Affairs, and have the greateſt Need of all Men, to *Watch daily at the Gates, and Wait at the Poſts of Wiſdome's doors*, uſe to be the greateſt *Truants* here, and the moſt ſlack and Liſtleſs of any, to Frequent the places of their *Improvement*, and duely to attend the Means and Helps that ſhould do their *Souls* Good. Such as can worſt afford to be *Abſent*, are the moſt ſeldom *Preſent*. They will rather Expoſe themſelves to the devouring *Enemy*, than come under God's *Banner*, and Hide themſelves in *the Clefts of the Rock*, that his *Goodneſs may paſs before them*. If they *muſt* Worſhip *Chriſt*, they will do it ſo, as none but *Himſelf* ſhall take Notice. Who does indeed take Notice, That they are *Aſhamed to Own Him Before Men*: And ſo He will once *Diſown* them before his *Father*, and all the holy *Angels*. The pretence is, They can do the buſineſs *as well* at their own Houſes; when in truth, they are too *Stately*, or too *Lazy*, to come unto *God's*. But you muſt go to *His* Houſe, if you expect the Bleſſing to come to your *Own*. For tho'

Bleſſings

Bleſſings have their Riſe in *Heaven*, they come to us thro' the *Church*. Pſal. 134. 3. *The Lord that made Heaven and Earth, Bleſs thee out of Zion.* They ſhall appear before Gods *Judgment Seat*, to their Confuſion, that will not appear at the *Mercy-Seat* of his Temple, in their Devotion. And the Enemies of Churches ſhall once have occaſion to *Haſte* them yet more, when they ſhall have another *Erection* at laſt, and Riſe up in the Judgment, to *Teſtifie* againſt them. And that which they now bear as a *Burthen*, ſhall eternally load them with a heavy *Remorſe*. When inſtead of catching all *Opportunities* to Appear before the Lord, they are ready to re-aſſume the hoggiſh *Gergeſenes* Requeſt, and *Beſeech Chriſt to Depart out of their Coaſts*. God knows how ſoon they may be Puniſhed with their own *Choice*, and turn'd out of thoſe *Churches*, which they ſo *Slighted*, when they had them. Yea they that are ſo *Humourſome* and *Wanton*, they will not Worſhip the Lord in the *Beauties of Holineſs*, may fear to be for ever excluded that *Holy Place Above*, which this below was to *Fit* them up for.

But there are who come to the *Houſe of Prayer*, not indeed to Pray, but to *Profane* the Sacred Place, and Affront Him to his Face who there Inhabits. Sometime they give the *Church* their Bodies, when *Rome* or *Mammon* has their Hearts. The Intention of their coming thither, is not to *Seek* and *Enjoy* the Lord. (if they really believ'd Him to be in that Place,

they would leſs *Care* to be there: or not be ſo *Careleſs* of ordering themſelves, when got thither:) But the Church is their *Theatre* to See, and to be Seen. There they can take their *Eaſe*, and Divert themſelves: and not only Gaze about, but Whiſper and Laugh, and make a *Merry Bout* even of that *Meeting*. They *Keep not their Foot when they go to the Houſe of God*. Nor ever put off the *Shooes* of their carnal Affections, when to tread the *Holy Ground*: But carry even as if it were at the *Play-Houſe*: As if they came but to Air a fine *Suit*: or to ſee how one is *Dreſt*, Or how another *Looks* or *Acts*: Which hath the beſt *Face*, or the gayeſt *Garb*: and to pick up matter for *Tattle* and *Story*: Or elſe to loll and fetch a *Nap*, and ſo *Deceive* the Time, and caſt *Contempt* on the Service. The *Church* would be a *Jayl* to them, if they did not take the Liberty ſo to *Profane* it. They can never be *Glad in the Houſe of Prayer*, but when they Miſtake the *Errand* that ſhould bring them thither, and find ſomewhat Gameſome and *Ridiculous*, to make them Sport. S. *Hieram*, in an Epiſtle to one notoriouſly Scandalous for ſuch Irreverence in *God's Houſe*, crys out, (*Non poſſum ulterius progredi.*) I want words to reach the Wickedneſs of this *Abuſe*. How then ſhall I undertake to Expreſs it, as it deſerves? May every one, in *Gods Fear*, beware of turning the Houſe of Prayer into ſuch a *Den of Thieves*, where God is robb'd of thoſe Hearts,

Hearts, which are the only Sacrifice that he looks after: Or to turn the Temple into a *Stews*, where the fire of Luſt flames above that of the *Altar:* And impudent *Goats* are Intregueing for their lewd *Amours*, inſtead of making their moſt humble and earneſt Court to the Heavenly *Bridegroom.* In *God's* Houſe let your thoughts be *Intent* upon God. The *Market* for Traffick, the *Hall* for Noiſe, The *Stage* for Vanity; but, (as *Moſes* left the Multitude behind him, when he went up to the *Mount*, So) let all fooliſh Luſts, and youthful Gauds, and Worldly Intereſts be laid aſide, when you *Enter the Gates of the Lord's Houſe.* And let not the Coming to *Church* be a *Counterfeit*, but Real *Drawing nigh to God*: Nor only take on you to Serve Him, but worſhip *in Spirit and in Truth.* If you are none of the Scornfull *Deſerters*, that help to make *the ways of Zion Mourn, and her Gates deſolate*, neither be any of the rude *Intruders*, that tempt even the Stones of the *Sanctuary* to cry out of you, coming thither but to *Pollute* the Habitation of God's Holineſs.

SECT. II.

Of not Praying in the Family.

THE Church is the *Houſe of Prayer*, but not the *Priſon*, to confine it within thoſe Walls; nor the only Houſe where Prayer is to

be made. It is vain to come unto *God's Houſe*, when you make no Conſcience to *Pray* at your own. In the Word God Serves us; In our Prayers, we Serve Him, or rather ourſelves upon him. And 'tis not what men appear *Abroad*, but how they carry the matter at *Home*, that is the main Trial of them. There they are apt to *Perſonate* others, Here they are *Themſelves*, and make it appear, whether they would have *God*, or themſelves to be *Uppermoſt*. A *Prayerleſs* Family is no better than a *Beaſt houſe*; and indeed a *Den of Thieves* too, where God is robb'd of his *Tribute*, and all their Souls of the *Benefit*. O what *Maſters* of Families are they, and how unworthy of that *Name* and *Poſt*, who will Provide no better *for thoſe of their own Houſe*, but Juſtle out of doors, Him that has moſt to do there? How can he walk in his Houſe with an *Upright Heart*, who reſolves not with *Joſhua*, *I and my Houſe will ſerve the Lord*? Doth any man think to keep up the dignity of his Place with *Huffing* and looking Big? As if he were too goodly, to *Cringe* every day at God's *Foot-ſtool*? *Silly* as well as *Proud* wretch! Whoever thinks to bear himſelf up, with a Credit *Uſurpt* at the loſs of *God's* Honour, who will be ſure to make his Deſpiſers *Contemptible*. When men Live together, as if they were *Aſhamed* to Pray together, or to take any notice, how they are all Oblig'd to the great *Benefactor*, whom they every one continually live upon; They can ſcarce hold their *Countenances*, to make ſuch

a *Mock*

a *Mock buſineſs* of it, to Bow the Knee to him in *Prayer*, whom they make ſo *Bold* with every where elſe: They ſo walk in their *Houſes*, that we may ask in quite another ſenſe than *David* did, *O when will the Lord come to them*? The ill *Education* and want of any *good Orders*, that is got into *Looſe Families*, is the *Bane* of Church and State, and *Plagues* the World with ſuch Miſchiefs, as are the daily *Grief* of every Senſible heart.

But the *Zeal* which ſhould be *Exerted* in this Service, how commonly is it turn'd againſt it? Men *Ill affected* this way ſtand upon *Terms* with *Chriſt Jeſus*, to *Reaſon* themſelves from under his *Yoke*. They cry out *Impoſition* and *Slavery*! and Twenty *Evaſions* to keep them off their Knees. 'Tis *Hyperdulia*, and wherefore is all this Waſte? And O how glad of any thing like an *Apology*, to Superſede the *Irkſom* Imployment? He that will but undertake to prove, That they may do as well without Prayers in their *Families*, ſhall Oblige them to be his Humble Servants, or any ones, rather than *His* that *Made* them. Nay he ſhall be even *Ador'd* as a Saviour, that comes to ſet them *Free*, where *God*, and ſome of his *Miniſters*, would tie them up. The Preacher of ſuch *Latitudinarian* Doctrine ſhall have Eſpouſers and *Proſelytes* in abundance. But who and what are they? Any to Credit the cauſe? Why all the Swearers, Drunkards, Fornicators, Rude Ruffians, and Vile companions of the neighbourhood are ready

dy to be his *Converts* and *Admirers*. For he ſpeaks their very *Hearts*, and exactly fits their turns. All the *Scandalous* company whoſe Carriage puts them out of conceit with all pious *Offices*, and makes it a *Hell* to them, to draw nigh to the *Holy God*, They catch, with the greateſt Greedineſs, that *Liberty*, which any of the *Sons of Corruption* offer them. When they ſhall be taught to Slight God with good *Warrant*: and to ask, Who ſhall *Confine* them, where the *Scripture* it ſelf hath left them Free? But they that are ſo ready to ſtand off here, for want of an Expreſs *Command*, are known too well, to be none of the *Tendereſt*, or forwardeſt men, to *Follow the Lord fully*, where his Word doth ſpeak out *Expreſly*. When they are commanded to *Walk in the Spirit*, and by it to *Mortify the deeds of the Body*: Yet who more Carnal and Looſe than they? By which we may too evidently perceive, That it is not ſo much out of *Conſcience*, as for the *Belly-God*, that they plead and contend. They would have *Elbow-room* enough, to Expatiate after their Luſts, and a Way in *Latitude*, and Eaſe, and State, to Heaven, and not be Limited to that *Narrow way*, which they could never abide.

But doth not the Holy *Scripture* oblige us to Serve and Honour God in all our *Relations*? and to *Recognize* our common Lord in our *Joint*, as well as *Perſonal* Capacity? Not neglecting thoſe *Conveniencies* which we have to Adore him? Then how can the *Houſholder*, with his Family, think

think themſelves Excuſed? If we are to Pray *Every where*, (that is fit for it,) Is the Houſe in *Utopia*, no where to be found? And ſhall we omit thoſe *Inviting* opportunities, when we Dwell together, and Eat and Drink and Converſe together, and yet not *Pray together*? How can the Maſter reaſonably expect *Homage* of his Servants, when he lets them not ſee him as careful to ſerve his *Maſter in Heaven*? Men will not diſpute themſelves out of their *Meals*, and their uſual *Refreſhments*, becauſe the *Scripture* doth not determine juſt *Where* and *When* and *How*, they ſhall Eat and Drink and Divert themſelves. Nor will they ask, What *Text* binds me to go to ſuch a good Friends *Houſe*, and receive his Kindneſs? Or to go to ſuch a *Market* or *Fair*, to Buy and Sell and get Gain? They can go *Without* a Command, and it's well, if they do not often venture to go *Againſt* the plaineſt Commands, for their Bodily pleaſure, and their Worldly profit. And then what is wanting but the Spiritual *Appetite*, to Savour and reliſh the things of *God's Spirit*, as good a Stomach to the Food of their *Souls*, and as great a Concernment for their *Eternal Advantage*, to Determine their Choice and Practice this way? And to make them flock as faſt to the *Throne of Grace*, and to ſee that all their Houſes be *Houſes of Prayer*. A dear *Love* to the Service would be above all *Arguments*, in the World for it. And aſſoon as any are *Quickned in Chriſt Jeſus*, and become *Alive unto God*, they will ſave us the labour of Perſuading

ſuading them, to go and *Feaſt* their Souls with Him, and to join in the Sacrifice wherewith he is well-pleaſed.

Whatever *Short cuts* ſome may fancy to Heaven, and laugh at the *Round-about-way* of Morning and Evening Prayer: I never heard of any *Dying man* that was of that mind. How many then do ſadly Bewail it, that they had not taken this courſe? So that the *Praying Families* are on the Sureſt Side, all muſt acknowledge: And they may be infinite *Gainers*: But for certain they can never *Loſe* by this Service. When it looks like *Loitering* by the way, and Hindring their work, Yet they are about their *Heavenly Father's Buſineſs*. And he that Imploys them in it, will not ſuffer them to Loſe ground by it. It ſtops them, but like a *Traveller's* Eating and Refreſhing himſelf, to recover *Strength* for his Journey. And poor people that cry, they have not *Time* for it, may more truly ſay, They have no *Mind* to it. For they can find Time for many matters of leſs *Importance*. And they had better abate ſome *Gains*, and themſelves be turn'd out of *Doors*, than graſp ſo much Buſineſs, as to *Juſtle* Prayer out of Doors. But indeed Prayers never made any *Beggars*, unleſs it be in that Senſe, as is no *Damage* or *Diſparagement* to any.

The laudable Uſage of all *Well-govern'd* Families, To go to their *Prayers*, before they fall to, and after they have Finiſhed, the *Buſineſs of the day*, cannot be *Confronted*, without a Proud Scornful Reflection upon the moſt *Judicious*, and the

the moſt *Pious* Chriſtians in the World. When the Family comes together in the *Morning* and *Evening*, This is the moſt decent way of bidding *Good Morrow*, and *Good Night*. And ſuch Families as *Give themſelves to Prayer*, uſe to give alſo the beſt *Examples* in other matters, and ſhew that they are the likeſt of all to be in the *Right*. Indeed an ordinary Obſerver, (if any thing impartial,) may eaſily ſee the Difference that is Commonly between *Praying* and *Prayerleſs* Families. I ſay, *commonly*, for it is Poſſible, the Service may be kept up in a *Perfunctory*, heedleſs, and cuſtomary manner, without any Improvement to the Worſhippers: But then the fault is not at all in the *Offices*, but in the *Way* of performance: And they are *Abuſed*, like many other Good things, that men often uſe without doing themſelves any Good in the *Uſe*. We may reaſonably expect in the *Praying Families* to find the *Fear* and *Love of God*, and all *Honeſty* and *Mercy*, and *Sobriety* and *Decency* to prevail and flouriſh: For the *Courſe* which they take Naturally tends to produce ſuch *Effects*, and thrô God's Bleſſing, it uſually proves *Succeſsful*. But how little cauſe ſhall we ſee to admire the *Religion* of ſuch as turn Prayers out of their *Houſes*? And alas, What, to their *Credit*, do they bring in the *Room* of ſuch Offices? Where ſhall you meet with ſuch *Nurſeries* of *Oaths* and *Brawls*, *Drunkenneſs* and *Lewdneſs*, *Cruelty* and *Knavery*? And who indeed can expect any other kind of *Fruits* among ſuch, as Sow no

Better? How ſhall they keep up the *Fire* of Religion, without any *Fewel* or *Blowing*? His *Grace* the late Lord Arch-Biſhop of *Canterbury*, Whoſe Memory ought ever to live in this *Church* with all Honour, as indeed among the Beſt 'tis precious, and even ſuch whoſe breath may be thought *Malignant* enough to Blaſt it, yet do but ſo betray their *Impotence* together with their *Vengeance*. Upon ſome that would *Unchriſt'n* him he has left ſuch an *Ethnick* Badge, as will ſtick much longer to them, becauſe they take the courſe every day, by *Proſcribing* Prayers, to prove their Houſes *Heatheniſh*, and themſelves no better than a Company of *Infidels* under the Banner of *Chriſt*. As they paſs in his great Judgment who tells us, in his Sermon of *Family-Religion*, That *Where the Worſhip of God, by daily Prayers, every Morning and Evening, is Neglected, He ſees not, how any Family can in reaſon, be eſteemed a Family of Chriſtians, or indeed to have any Religion at all.*

And what a Contemptible *Head* is that of a Family, that hath neither *Eyes* to lead them in the ways of God, nor a *Tongue* to Speak for them at the *Throne of Grace*? If thou haſt *Senſe* and *Readineſs* of Expreſſion in other matters, What is it, but thy own *Wickedneſs*, when thou want'ſt it for *Prayers*? And if thou wanteſt *Gifts* and Abilities, why doſt thou not make it up another way? By ſome *Subſtitute* in thy Room, or by ſome wholſom *Forms* to help thee out? When, (as the laſt named moſt Reverend

Author

Author obſerves,) *There are excellent Helps to this purpoſe, in the ſeveral Books of Devotion, calculated for the private uſe of Families.* That the thing may not be Neglected then, get it Diſcharged as well as thou canſt, and that will be Accepted, by him who looks firſt on the *Willing Mind*, and where he ſees that, *Deſpiſes not the Day of Small things*, but takes poor matters in good part, *according to what a man hath*, or can procure, wherewithal to *Appear before the Lord*, and make his Oblations to the moſt High God. Thus let every Houſholder think himſelf concern'd to lead his Dependants the way to the Throne of Grace. And let not the *Members* of Families here ſtand for *Cyphers*, but carefully bear their *Part* in this Service: Nor think it enough to be ſtill *Preſent* at the Office, without a hearty *Concurrence* and *Joining* to Aſſiſt in it. That the Prayer of the Family may not be only a *Formality*, and ſome as *Licentious* in their *Doing* it, as others in leaving it *Undone*.

SECT. III.

Of not Praying in Secret.

THere are who concern themſelves in no *Devotion*, any further than they have Company, and are carried with the *Croud*. As if they durſt not Truſt the *All-ſeeing* Eye of God, without

without Witneſs: Or like *Dead things*, could not Move, any further, than *Moved*: Or like *Preſs'd Soldiers*, would do Nothing, if they could tell how handſomly to *Avoid* it. But to Sound a *Trumpet* in the Streets, or to Pray *Aloud* in the *Cloſet*, with a deſire to be Heard and Obſerved of *Men*, ſpoils all the expectation of Reward and Praiſe from *God*. The Heart knows its own *Bitterneſs*, and can beſt tell its own *Tale*: And if Sincere and Serious, it cannot be at Reſt, till got *Alone*, to Pour out it ſelf before the *Lord*. But this is none of the *Hypocrites* Care, who little regards what he is towards God in *Private*, So he can but Shew well before men *Abroad*. Or if he Prays *Alone*, it is but to be the Better thought of, by thoſe who, he thinks, take *Notice*: Or only to get a little out of the Dinne of his *Clamorous* Conſcience. Not drawn by the Heavenly Sweets of that Satisfaction and Comfort, which is to be found in *Secret Devotion*.

Somewhat indeed may thus be Offered at it, by thoſe that are not *Right*. But ſuch as are not at all *Us'd* to it, cannot chuſe but be *Naught*. When they Worſhip but for Company and *Faſhion Sake*, and if left to themſelves e'ne let it *Drop* to the ground, it ſpeaks ſuch a *Shineſs* to God, as betrays their Hearts, not to be *Right* with Him. For if he were the Beloved of their Souls, that had their *Hearts*, He would then have more of their *Company*. But when they Shun his *Face*, and at his Invirations to Come

to

to Him, they hang *Back* from him; Sure all is *to pieces* between Him and their Souls: And all the Service they are preſent at, together with others, is but meerly a *Forced Putt*, Becauſe they know not how, for ſhame, to avoid it.

And thus, How many, for want of *Communing with their own Hearts*, and Retiring to Seek God apart, are *Strangers* to themſelves even all their days? And (keeping in a perpetual *Round* of Pleaſures, and Buſineſs, and Company,) are ſo taken up, and otherwiſe *Engaged*, that they ſcarce ever come to know aright, How the caſe ſtands with their *Souls*. They that find no delight in *Cloſets* and Religious Retirements, but all in Paſtimes, and Drinking-houſes, and Jocoſe Company, and ſuch men of the World as they can *Get* by, O what a Dark Buſineſs, and Melancholly Task, in their eſteem, is the Withdrawing, to enjoy *Communion with God*? They will ſooner *Scoff* at it, than ever ſet themſelves to *Seek* after any ſuch thing. And then alas, What have they more than the *Huſk* and *Shell* of Religion? Seeing the *Pith* and *Kernel* of all lies in making Conſcience of *Secret Sins*, and *Secret Duties*: I ſay, making *Conſcience* of them, and neither ſuffering the Private Prayers to be *Omitted*, nor yet going only, *pro formâ*, to the Cloſet, and there making ſuch a Buſineſs of it, as *Domitian* of his going alone to catch *Flies*: But dwelling in the *Secret Place of the Moſt High*, Minding his All ſeeing *Eye*

upon us, and Sitting down under the *Shadow of his Wings*, with a ſingular Complacence and Delight. *Secret Sins*, if they are in thy Delights, and thy Purpoſe to Stick to them, will ſpoil all thy *Secret Prayers*. But when thou art for having the Searcher of Hearts, to *Search and Try Thee*, that thy Heart may be approved unto Him, then ſhalt thou go Boldly to thy *Father in Secret*, and *See his Face with Joy*, and find ſuch *Soul-Satisfaction* with Him, as ſhall for ever *Engage* thee to be His.

CHAP. III.

Of Licentiouſneſs as to the Time *of Prayer.*

THE pious Soul *Eccho*'s to God's Call, Pſal. 27. 8. *When thou ſaidſt, Seek ye my Face, My Heart ſaid unto thee, Thy Face, Lord, will I ſeek.* No ſooner is the *Motion* made, but it is gladly *Embraced*, Nothing in the world is ſo grateful to a *holy Heart*, as ſuch *Heavenly Correſpondence*. But if wicked men make any *Overtures* of approach to the Holy God, they care not how *Seldom* they come anear Him; and when they muſt be Concerned with Him, they care not how *Soon* they have done. His *Day* which he has ſet apart for the purpoſe, it may be,

be, doth not fit their *purpose*. And thô he bids them *Keep holy the Sabbath*, they have somewhat else to do, than to wait upon *Him*, and cannot a'while to be at his *Beck*. Let him be ready to receive them, yet they are otherwise Engag'd for that *Time*, and must put it off, till a more *Convenient Season*. Or if they pay any Attendance upon the *Lord's-day*, that must Attone for the Neglect, tho' he hear no more of them all the *Week* after. *Sunday* is enough, they think they have Served him well. It shall be When they List, after their *Capricious Fancy*, and not according to his *Divine Appointment*. He says, *Now is the Accepted Time*, and *Hear his Voice To day*: But they think another time will Serve the turn, and *Hereafter* do as well, any *Idle Minutes* that they know not what else to do with: Still they would put off for the *Present*, what they have no mind to do *at all*. 'Tis but now and then a little, as they please, and as the *Toy* takes them, that they do any thing like *Serving the Lord*, and do it in such a manner, as if he must be much *Beholden* to them for it. They will not *Engage* in it, nor Tie to it, and be Constant at it. Only some little *Snatches*, and wide *Breaches* between. They cannot Live a day without their *Meals*, but tho many days come between, they find no *Want* of their Prayers. Tho *Scripture* tells them not, How oft they shall Eat or Sleep, yet they have their *Set Times* for both Meals and Rest. But O where's any the like Care to *Secure* their Prayers! 'Tis

only in a *Fit*, or a *Humor*, or a *Fright*, that they are for Praying. And if they have any *Prayer-Times*, Yet how ſmall a matter ſhall *Break* them ? and take them off, to ſerve their *Luſts*, or any one, or any thing, before the great *Lord of all* ? Only the *Scraps* and *Leavings* of the World and Fleſh, ſhall be thought good enough for his Portion. They are not at Leiſure to *Seek the Lord while he may be Found* ; but forget what he ſent them into the world to do : and how ſoon they ſhall awhile to *Dye*, and a'while to go to *Judgement*, and a'while to Abide by it, in the Future ſtate *Everlaſting*. And amidſt all their other Buſineſs, if they mind not the *One thing Needful*, above all, they had e'en as good have *Slept* out their Time, as ſo *Beſtir* themſelves in the World.

I know, many of the *Labouring*, and *Buſy* people uſe to complain, That their hands are ſo Full, and *Buſineſs* lies ſo hard upon them, they have not *Leiſure* to do as they would, every day, in the Greateſt and Beſt of all *Works*. So giving Intimations, what Mighty Matters we might expect from them, had they but the *Opportunities* which ſome others enjoy. Tho, alas, upon the *Lord's-Day* it ſelf, when the fair *Opportunity* is offer'd them, and *Worldly Buſineſs* is out of the way, Yet even then they are ſo *Liſtleſs* to any *other Buſineſs*, and will find ſo many things to put off the earneſt Attendance upon *God*, that they but ſhamefully *Confute* Themſelves, and ſhew what little *Reality* is in their Pretenſions. But be thy particular *Calling* what

it

it will, man, If thou doſt not make it *Subſervient* to the General, and *Abide in it with God*, to make him the *Alpha* and *Omega* of all thy Works, ſo as to have them *Begun, Continued, and Ended* in Him, Thou doſt but *Labour in the Fire*, To Riſe *Early*, and ſit up *Late*, and Eat the Bread of Carefulneſs, and Graſp all the Time that ever thou canſt, to make thy utmoſt Benefit of the *World*: Yea thou doſt not only Weary thy ſelf in *Vain*, but takeſt a deal of pains in this World, to *Undo* thy ſelf for ever in the Next, As long as the *Lean Kine* ſo devour the *Fat*, and Earthly affairs, Eat up all the Heavenly, and *Worldly Imployments* are thy Souls continual *Impediments*: So that thou makeſt Light of all the Lord's *Invitations*, for Eagerneſs to be gone to the *Farm* or the *Merchandize*; Thou wilt at laſt find it the worſt and ſaddeſt *Bargain* that ever thou madeſt, ſo to *Gain the World*. When thou muſt needs have it, tho thou ſetteſt at nought *God* and thy *Soul*, for the *Sake* of it. Doſt thou think it ſuch a Needful work to make *Proviſion for the Fleſh*? Be it granted, that thou maiſt in due Time and Meaſure, *Care* for thy Body: But then if that may be done, Remember ſtill that ſomewhat elſe of much more *Importance* muſt not be left *Undone*. And he whom thou calleſt thy *Lord* and *Saviour* ſhews thee a Work of far greater *Neceſſity*. Luk. 10. 42. and Joh. 9. 4. A Work which thou muſt concern thy ſelf to do in the *Firſt place*, and prefer it above every thing elſe in the World. And if thou Contri-

veſt no better, and takeſt no more Care of *that Work*, but to run it up in the *Narrows*, yea even quite *Thruſt* it out ſtill with other Matters: If thou count'ſt it enough to Serve Him, who gives thee all thy *Time* here in this World for his Service, Only with the World's *Reliques*, when thou haſt nothing elſe to do, and ſcarce ſo neither: O what *Account* of thy Time canſt thou hope, with any Comfort, to render at his *Tribunal*, when *Time* with thee ſhall *be no more*! If thou Wanteſt *Time* to do God's Work, thou wilt Want an *Eternity* to Enjoy his Rewards. And if thou doſt not Work the *Works* of him that Sent thee, while it is *Day*, The *Night* will be upon thee, when thou canſt not *Work*. And then if thy *Courſe* be Finiſh'd, before thy *Work* is done, Thou wilt Bewail the Want of Time, when too Late to Call Back what thou haſt thrown away to other Purpoſes, quite *Forreign* and *Impertinent* to that great *End*, for which the precious *Talent* was put into thy Hands. Even the men of greateſt *Buſineſs*, that had moſt to do in the World, when, at laſt, they come to *Leave* it, ſhall perceive, That no men elſe upon Earth were more *Concern'd* than Themſelves, to *Care* for their Souls, and *Flee from the Wrath to come*, and Mind the Way to Heaven, and *Work out their own Salvation*: (However they Turn'd their Heads another way, and were all Taken up ſtill about ſomewhat elſe: and ſhall wiſh, when Time is *Paſt*, That they had Neglected every thing in the World, rather than this

this *One thing*, which is of Abſolute Neceſſity to be done. Here then Behold a Commendable *Thrift* and *Covetouſneſs*, To be Greedy of Opportunities for thy *Soul*, To Engroſs and Steal Time from other *leſs Concerning* Matters, for *Prayer* and the Worſhip of God: Yea to Make *Times* for this Service, whatever Buſineſs elſe thou *Entrencheſt* upon. And here's the Unexceptionable, holy *Epicuriſm*, (if thou canſt hit upon it,) to be taken up with ſuch ſweet *Satisfaction* this Way, as to reckon an *Hour* ſo ſpent Better than a *Thouſand* otherwiſe beſtowed.

Tho I would not lay a *Snare* for any ones Conſcience, in obliging them to Believe, That they can never in any caſe, without Sin, omit any *Accuſtomed Office*, when ſome great *Occaſion* Intervening may call another way, Yet *Conſtancy* in a good Courſe, is a commendable Vertue: and the Spiritual Life is more *Orderly*, when we have our *Stated Times*, which we will not commonly Break, nor be eaſily taken off by any *Trivial* accidents. Every day we want the other things mentioned in our *Lord's Prayer*, as well as *Daily Bread*. And the daily need we have of *This*, teaches us alſo, together with this, to beg *the reſt*. Is he a *Man* or a *Bruit*, that makes not Prayer the *Key* to unlock the Day, and the *Bolt* to ſhut it up? The *Jews* counted it the *Abomination of Deſolation*, when, under *Antiochus*, the Daily Sacrifice was *Suſpended*. And juſtly may we count that an *Ominous day*, in which no Sacrifice of our *Prayers* has been offe-

red. It is as if no *Sun* had Riſen that day: and laves us worſe than without a *Sun*, *Without God in the World.* When Prayer ſhould be as the very *Pulſe* of our Souls. And even every Breath we fetch, ſhould be as a *Breathing after God, the Living God*, in whom we ever *Live and Move and Are*: and upon whom we do hang every *Moment*, for Life and Breath and all things that ever we *Have*, or *Hope for.*

CHAP. IV.

Of the Licentious Asking Unfit *things.*

PRayer is a profeſſing of ourſelves to be *Poor* and *Needy*, That we have not ſo much as a Bit of *Bread*, but what we *Beg.* And therefore our Gracious Lord directs us to Open our mouths in *Prayer*, that he may Fill them with *Good.* Yet the Liberty to ask what we Will, doth not *Authorize* us to ask, *That we may Conſume on our Luſts*, or Reak *Vengeance* on our Enemies. To look up for Supplies of this Life, is *Nature's* Prayer, without Grace. Yea the *Bruit Creatures* are directed to it even without *Reaſon. The young Lions roar after their Prey, and Seek their Meat from God.* Pſal. 104. 21. They that Enlarge their Deſires, as *Hell* and the *Grave*, and are not Satisfied, Craving their *Portion in this Life*, their Belly full of God's *Hid Treaſure*; may have their Wiſhes, with *Leanneſs*

neſs ſent into their Souls. And that will be a *Canker*, to eat out the very Heart of all the *Bleſſings*. They Live, but to *Eat*, and ſo all their Praying, is ſerving no God ſave only the *Belly*. Whereas our *Lord* hath taught us to ask *Three* Petitions, For his *Glory*, *Kingdom*, and *Pleaſure*, before we ſpeak a word of our own *Bodily* Neceſſity. *Hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy Will be done.* And then *Give us this Day our Daily Bread. Spiritual* Bleſſings ſhould ever be ſought *Firſt* : and the *Temporal* but for Spiritual *Ends*: Not to *Unfit* us for Duty, or *Hinder* us in the Service of God, but that we may Serve him with the more *Quiet* Minds, and *Cheerful* Spirits. It muſt not be *Meat for our Luſts*, (with the wanton *Iſrael*, but *Food Convenient*, which was the conſiderate *Agur*'s Prayer. And what is *Convenient*, we muſt leave *Infinite Wiſdom* to Judge, be at the Finding of our *Heavenly Father*, and willing he ſhould *Chuſe our Inheritance for us.* 'Tis the Bleſſing from *Above*, that makes what we have *Bread*, to Nouriſh and Satisfy, and do us Good. And the Prayer which Implores that *Bleſſing* Sanctifies it to us, and makes it *Ours*, and indeed *The Childrens Bread.* But wicked Worldlings care not *How* or *Whence* it comes, So that they *have it*. They are not ſo much concerned to get the *Bleſſing of Heaven*, as the *Fullneſs of the World.* Or if they ask any *Bleſſing*, it is only the Bleſſing that *maketh Rich*, and helps them to Proſper and take Root, and ſpread themſelves and Flouriſh in the *Earth.*

Earth. They would only Serve their turns upon the *Lord*, to get Deliverance and Proſperity, that they may take their Liberty to *Live after the Fleſh*, and have the fairer opportunities to fulfill all their *Luſts*. Their Prayers are but the *Reakings* of their good *Stomachs*, and the Boiling up of their *Luſtful Appetite*. Health and Wealth, Seaſonable Weather and Plentiful days, with Peace and Liberty to *Enjoy the World*, is the top of all their wiſhes. They give themſelves for Proofs, That *Corah* and his Company were not the only men Swallowed up of the *Earth*: When alas, Themſelves are Sunk and loſt, and even *Buried Alive* in it: Till Dead to *God* and quite off all *Traffick* with Heaven They think they can never have Enough of the *World*: But they ſhall have *Enough*, when the duſt of the *Grave* has ſtopt their *Mouths*, and then wiſh *too Late*, that they had been *Wiſer*, and coveted earneſtly *Better Gifts*.

But there are *Extravagant* Prayers which are *Blaſphemous* to be Made, and would *Undo* the Petitioner, to have them Granted. When men Pray for *God's Diſhonour*, and their own *Shame* and *Ruine*: and would have themſelves or others *Confounded* and *Damned*. They may find themſelves too ſoon at the end of their *Curſed Wiſhes*. And had they any ſenſe in them, and would but ever give themſelves leave to *Conſider*, they would dread ſo to *Dare* the God that has *Power to Kill and caſt them into Hell*. To beg of God for any Wicked thing, is not only a

Profanation

Profanation of Prayer, and turning the Means of Grace into an Inſtrument of *Villany*, But it is alſo a *Chuſing of Death*, and running violently upon the *Wrath to come*, which every man in his *Wits* will do all that ever he is Able, to *Flee from*.

CHAP. V.

Of Licentiouſneſs as to the Object *of Prayer.*

PRayer is the main part of all our Worſhip, and to pay this *Royalty* of the Crown of Heaven, The Tribute of *Adoration* to others than to *God himſelf*, Be it to Images, Saints, Angels, or any thing elſe, is expreſly forbidden. Mat. 4. 10. *Get thee hence, Satan, for it is written, Thou ſhalt Worſhip the Lord thy God, and Him Only ſhalt thou Serve.* In all ſuch *Divided Worſhip* may be ſeen the Print of the *Cloven Foot*. To worſhip any *Creature*, with *Divine* Worſhip, is to make it an *Idol*: And Idols are of his *Erecting*, who is all for *Uſurping* God's Honour to himſelf. And ſo the Children which were Offered to the Idols of *Canaan*, were ſaid to be offered unto *Devils*. Pſal. 106. 37, 38. The *Apoſtle* makes *Invocation* peculiar to the God in whom we Believe. Rom. 10. 14. *How ſhall they*

they Call on Him, in whom they have not Believed? For I muſt Believe him to whom I Pray, to be *Omnipreſent*, *Omniſcient* and *Omnipotent*: Or elſe I am ſure he could not Hear and Help me, and all my *Fellow-Supplicants* all over the World, in all the things which we have to Beg. And if *Saints* and *Angels* be *Omnipreſent*, *Omniſcient*, and *Omnipotent*, what then are they leſs than *Deities*? And what more can we aſcribe to the *moſt High God*? As there is but One God, So we are told but of *One Mediator between God and Man*, 1 *Tim.* 2. 5. And that is *Enough*: For none can have more *Power* and *Intereſt* with God, than He. None can have more *Pity* and *Kindneſs* for us. And what we cannot obtain thrô the Mediation of *Jeſus* alone, We may deſpair ever to get, by *Ingratiating* ourſelves with any other *Friends*. This *One* is better than all the *Strings*, which they have at *Rome* to their Bow. He that taught us to ſay, *Our Father*, adds not a Syllable of any Prayers that we are to make to his *Mother*. Nor does God ſtand in need, (like the imperfect Princes of the *Earth*,) to be Sollicited by *Courtiers* and *Proxies*, who muſt indeed firſt *Learn* from Him, the very Matter which they preſent to Him. And all the *Good Manners* of fetching this wide *Circuit*, is utterly ſpoil'd by the *Diſobedience* of the thing. It is ſuch a piece of *Good Breeding*, as the Law calls *Treaſon*, to give the *King's Crown* to a *Courtier*. It is to offer *Rebellion* for *Sacrifice*: and pretend to *Honour* God, with the *Violation* of his own Law. It's

It's true, We may deſire our preſent Friends, to *Pray for us.* But we uſe not to ſtand here, and Call upon ſome in the *Eaſt Indies:* Nor to apply to our Friends, with the very ſame *Geſtures*, and *Expreſſions*, as unto *God* Himſelf. Indeed even the *Ora pro Nobis*, applied by us to thoſe in Heaven, is *Impertinent enough*, and we may better imploy ourſelves, than ſo ſpend our *Breath:* which we know not if ever it *Reach* to them, whither we direct it. But if we ſhall be allowed capable of Underſtanding the common *Conſtruction* of the *Popiſh* Offices, as plain as words can expreſs, They do Pray *Directly* to *Saints*, for the very ſame things, that we do to *God.*

As for us, We would *Honour* God's Saints more, than to think them ſo Proud, as ever to *Arrogate*, or Abide, the Glory of their *Bleſſed Maker* to be conferred upon Them: Or to think them *Ambitious* of that Worſhip, which was the *Devil*'s deſire. When their language on Earth, was, *Sirs, Why do ye theſe things? Stand up, I my ſelf alſo am a man. See thou do it not.* Sure they have not ſince, *Unlearn'd* that Humility in *Heaven*, for which they were ſo *Eminent* here below, as to thank us now for the *Service.* No, they are too Good, to *Endure* it. And they that Pray to an *Image*, Not only do Diſhonour the *Infinite Majeſty*, that can never be ſo Repreſented, without being moſt groſly *Abuſed:* But alſo Debaſe themſelves into a *Likeneſs* with that Senſeleſs thing, which they

they fall down to. Pſalm 115. 8. *They that make them are Like unto them; So is every one that Truſteth in them.*

And whoever Truſts to any thing which they Are, or Have, to any thing in them or about them: and fly for that *Refuge* to any Fruitions, Intereſts, Friends, or Creatures in the World, which is only to be found in Him, that Made Heaven and Earth: As they Deſert and Diſoblige Him, who *will not give his Glory to another*, So they miſerably Diſappoint and Abuſe themſelves, and come under the *Imprecation*, Jer. 17. 15. *Curſed is the man that Truſteth in man, and maketh Fleſh his Arm, and whoſe Heart departeth from the Lord.*

CHAP. VI.

Of Licentiouſneſs in the Manner *of Praying.*

SECT. I.

Taking no Care of the Heart.

WHEN men draw nigh to God with their *Mouth*, and their *Hearts* are far from him, Contenting themſelves, to go over ſo many Words, in the meer *Lip-labour*, and Yawning over ſome faint Petitions, in a *Liſtleſs*, drowſy manner, as if they were not well Awake,

Awake, doing nothing *Heartily, as to the Lord:* Yea when their buſineſs is not to Meet and Enjoy the *Lord*, but like ſuch as Viſit only out of a *Formality*, and not for any *Cordial* Friendſhip, care not if the Perſon be at *Home*, or no, ſo that they have performed the *Task:* They do but *Take the Name of God in Vain*, and take on them to Worſhip. For it is but the *Picture* or *Carkaſs* of Worſhip, no Worſhip indeed, unleſs we *Serve him with our Spirit.* If it be not the Act of the *Mind*, it is not *We*: and no more than *Perſonating* the Devout. When the Supplicants have no concern, either to *Prepare* the heart for Prayer, or to keep it *Intent* upon the work in Praying: When they preſumptuouſly go forth in their own *Strength*, and ruſh upon the Service, without conſidering what they are going about: And when fallen upon it, they mind not whither the Heart *Roves* and gads: Let the *Tempter* Jog and Interrupt them, as the *Pythoneſs* did St. *Paul*, when he went to Prayer, *Acts* 16. 16. Yet they take no care to ſeize, and call in the *Vagabond* Thoughts: Then the Prayer is nothing elſe, but only ſo much *Said*, and a *Huddle* of Words pour'd out into the empty Air: Of no Significancy at all, but only to Accuſe and Condemn them, for making ſo Bold with the *Searcher of Hearts*, To lie Babbling in his Preſence, and make but a Noiſe, as *Sounding Braſs, and the Tinkling Cimbal:* Yea, and commit a ſort of *Perjury*, Invocating the *Deity*, to witneſs but a *Lye*,

a *Lye*, becauſe they Intend nothing leſs than what they ſay: and if they but ſtay out the *Time*, and run over the *Words*, the work is done: Such careleſs Prayers are never like to effect any great and Deſirable matters. And when *Duty* ſo flags, no wonder if their *Comfort* alſo droops; for the vigorous *Exerciſes* of Godlineſs are the *Oyl* to keep in the ſhining *Lamp* of Heavenly Hope and Joy. And when the *Heart*, inſtead of ſtooping down under the humble *Senſe* of Sin, is *Lifted* up in a Proud conceit of themſelves, and ſo directly *Contradicts* the Self-abaſing work they are upon: Inſtead of Praying in *Faith*, Believes nothing that *God* hath ſaid, and ſo puts a *Bar* to all their Hopes of receiving any thing at his *Hands:* Inſtead of abounding with *Love*, is full of Cores and Malice, neither for the Giving, or Forgiving *Charity*, and ſo turns the Supplication even into an *Execration*, becauſe our Lord, (who has charg'd us, *when we Stand*, (or ſet ourſelves upon) *Praying*, *to Forgive*) Teacheth us to ask and Expect the Mercy to *Ourſelves*, but only as we ſhew and Extend it to *Others*: And when, inſtead of Burning with fervent *Zeal*, (like the Fire in the *Alembick*) to ſend up its earneſt Deſires, the *Heart* is Playing behind the Curtain, and the *Oſcitant* pretenders to Worſhip do but Trifle, and offer up a *Heartleſs* Service: as thoſe who ſeem very *Indifferent* whether they be Heard, or not, yea rather *Afraid* to be taken at their Words: All this

this while, there may be ſomewhat like *Seeking*, but here is no *Striving to Enter*, when the Heart is no more *Engaged to the Lord.* Nay 'tis but a meer piece of *Mock-Devotion*, that inſtead of *Attoning* for our Sins, does but *Add* ſtill more to the Number. And then, alas, What *Hope* can men have from ſuch kind of *Prayers*, even for which they have a great deal more to *Anſwer?* No Wit or Parts, or the moſt curious Art to Pack words neatly together, is enough to make a good Prayer, without the *Drawing Nigh of the Heart*, and *the Spirit of Supplication.* The *Springs* of Action, upon what Motives we proceed, and to what Ends we do it, are moſt of all to be regarded; tho they be *Latent*, like the Roots of things that lye under *Ground:* Yet in the Scrutiny and Examination of ourſelves, this is the main Enquiry, Whether our *Principles* and *Deſigns* be right and ſound at the Bottom? Whether God's holy *Fear* and *Faith* and *Love* ſet us a going? and whether the *Pleaſing* of his Will, the *Honouring* of his Name, and the attaining of his *Favour*, to be made *Liker* and to be brought *Nearer* to Him, be our grand Aim and Intention. Better let the Heart lead the Words, thô they be but *few* and *mean*, than be full of fine *Expreſſions*, and no *Heart* to follow. But O how is the *Deceiver Deceived*, that goes about to *Mock* the only Wiſe God? As good Affront him in the *Face of the Sun*, as to Diſſemble with him in the *Secret of the*

Heart. And let ſuch as are for playing the *Hypocrite* with him, but forbear till they can do it ſo, as he ſhall not be *Aware* of it, And then, be ſure, they will never *Dare* to offer it.

SECT. II.

Taking no Care of the Words.

THE main Province of man, is to *Keep his Heart*, but yet it is not *All*, nor the *Only* thing that he hath to look after. He muſt ſee, that out of the *Abundance* of his Heart, his *Mouth* ſpeak to the Purpoſe, and as Becomes him. 'Tis an intolerable Preſumption, for poor Mortals, that are but Sinful wretched Worms, to be *Raſh* with their Mouths, to utter any thing that comes *Uppermoſt*, (tho never ſo Crude and wild,) before the moſt High and Wiſe and Holy *God*. As if the Words of Prayer needed no other recommendation than *Boldneſs*, and men might ſpeak what their Liſt, in the greateſt *Preſence*. As if they thought the Lord either ſuch a *Sorry Maſter*, whom any thing were good enough for: Or one ſo *far off*, as to be out of Hearing, and not to Know what were ſaid. But it is the Liberty of *Praying*, not of *Prating*, that I plead for. If it be a *Licenſe* taken, I am ſure, it is not *Given*, to roll and *Luxuriate* in empty Expreſſions, without either *Spirit*, or ſo much as any

any *Good Senſe*. To prevent which, we may do well to *Digeſt* aforehand the *Words*, aswell as the *Matter* of our Prayers. At leaſt to have in ſtore and readineſs ſuch a Stock of *Authentick* Expreſſions, as are fit and proper for our *Devotions*: Out of which we may produce what is *Pertinent*, and not be at a *Loſs*, to expreſs the *Sentiments* and wiſhes of our Hearts.

Tho an eaſy *Unaffected* Stile, ſuited to the Underſtanding and Infirmity of the Worſhippers, is the fitteſt and beſt: Becauſe Words in Prayer, are uſed more for our own Sakes, than His, that underſtands our *Deſires*, without our *Words*: Yet too *Looſe* a Dreſs argues a *Contempt* of the Preſence we are in. When if the Tongue be but kept *Going*, any impertinent *Clack*, or the moſt courſe and tatter'd ſtuff ſhall ſerve the turn. Nay ſo *Weak* and *Flat* are ſome, and ſo *Homely* and *Fulſome* are others in their Prayers, that, (if we may here credit Reports,) The *Silline ſs* of the one, and the *Rudeneſs* of the other, makes their Company in *Pain* for them: and where others beg to be *Heard*, it might be better for them, if God did *not Hear* them. Their very *Tone* of Prayer, betraying their Contempt of Heaven, when they *Gabble* over what they have to ſay, without any *Submiſſive* Voice, or *Lively* Accents, or *Affectionate* Strain, to ſhew how *Awful*, and in what *good Earneſt*, they are. Our *Voice* is the *Index* of our *Mind*, and by

that we ſignify the Devotion which is in our *Hearts*. And he that talks at *Random* before the Lord, ſhews little care that his Heart is in, to perform Service meet for *God's* Acceptance. We had as good Pray in an *Unknown*, as in an *Unregarded* Language. The one is to ſay, *We Know not what*, and the other, *We Care not what*. But if we muſt Worſhip with the Spirit, it is requiſite we ſhould *Know* what we ſay, and Pray with the *Underſtanding*, or elſe how can our *Mind* and *Spirit* be concerned? 'Tis leſs Affront to be *Silent* before the Lord, than to offer to Him Service that is to us, *Unintelligible Gibberiſh*, or *Empty Talk*. And I cannot but tax it for a very condemnable *Intemperance* and Looſeneſs of Speech, in Prayer, when the Tongue is ſuffered to run out, quite beyond the Senſe and Devotion of the *Speaker*, and alſo as far beyond the Attention and Patience of the *Hearers*. When the Prayers are ſpun out to a *Tedious* Length, to ſhew how far a man is able to hold out, and *Jade* and tire all his Company, till they Long for nothing more, than to be out of that *Pain*; and then rejoyce in the Deliverance, and *Dread* ſuch another Affliction. May they Beware, by whom ſuch *Offence* comes, that they *Diſtaſte* not any, (too apt to *Imbibe* ſuch Prejudices) againſt the *Worſhip of God*, to whom, they ſhould uſe all Ingenuous and harmleſs Artifices, to *Recommend* and *Endear* it.

SECT.

SECT. III.

Taking no Care of the Behaviour *in Prayer.*

GOD that is *Terrible out of his Holy Places*, ought *Greatly to be Feared of all that are about Him.* And none of his *Kindneſs* to us, muſt ever tempt us to forget our *Diſtance*, and *Grow* upon Him, as if he were but *Such a one as our ſelves.* Ignorant people think baſely of *God*, in the form of an *Old man*, ſitting in his *Chair:* to which Bungling Conceit the *Popiſh Painters* have lent their Help, daring ſo to *Picture* Him that is *Inviſible*, and *Incomprehenſible.* And anſwerable to the *Opinion* conceived of God, uſes to be the *Worſhip* paid to him. When men think Low and *Slightly* of God, they can be as Rude and *Saucy* with him, and divulge their *Inward* Contempt in their Carriage *Abroad:* Preſenting no Oblations, but what more *Affront* than *Honour* him. As if they came not to Adore and Pray, but to *Vaunt* and *Huff*, to *Shew* or *Divert* themſelves, to *Scandalize* their Neighbours, and *Sadden* the hearts of ſome, and make a *Game* for others: To caſt their *Dirt* and *Scorn* upon *Holy things*, in their Yawning or Sleeping over them, or Laughing the while, and Playing with them. And by their Countenance and Geſture and Actions, ſhewing no more *Concern* in the *Worſhip of God*, than if

it were an idle *Gambol*, or the moſt Trivial buſineſs. They will obſerve and Revere a *frail man* that ſhall Dye, but make even nothing of the Almighty, Everliving *God*, who *Awes* the World with a *Look*, and will make his Deſpiſers diſcern, to their eternal Coſt, between them that *Honoured*, and them that ſo *Viliſied* Him. *Chriſtians* that behave themſelves *Rude* and *Unmannerly* in their Worſhip, ſhall be condemned in Judgment by the *Turks*, who are ſaid to be ſo *Curious* in this point, they think it will Spoil all their *Prayers*, if they but *Scratch the head with a Finger*, while they are upon them. The dreadful *Judge of Quick and Dead* is not to be treated after the rate of an ordinary man. They that have ſuch a *Clowniſh Familiarity*, have never the more, but the leſs *Friendſhip with God*. The Prayer that *Puffs up*, ſerves but to do us *hurt*. When we are *Proud of our Prayers*, (which are indeed but Acknowledgments of *Indigence* and *Guilt*, and Offices of *Humiliation* and *Repentance*,) we quite miſtake their *Deſign*, and ſhall as much fail too of their *Succeſs*. And inſtead of Drawing nigh to God, He will *See us afar off*. 'Tis his Grace to take even our *Beſt* in good part at our hands, (which is but a mean Preſent for the *moſt High*:) and to imploy ſinful Worms in his Service, who *Humbles* himſelf to Behold, even the things that are in *Heaven*, and hath the higheſt *Angels* ambitious to Attend upon His *Throne*. And if

we

we uſe to Applaud ourſelves, (*Principibus placuiſſe viris,*) to fit the Humour of *Great men*, How much more ſhould we rejoyce, to be Acceptable to Him in whoſe *Favour is Life?* Who (unleſs we *hold Back*, what is in our *Power* to Give,) will not Deſpiſe us, that *it is no Better*, when he ſees *we Have no Better.* But he will not endure, that Proud *Scorners*, and rude *Lubbers* ſhould come to his Face, only to *Pollute* his Ordinances: but will caſt their wretched Offerings, as *Dirt*, in their Faces, eſpecially, when they are called by his *Name*, and pretend to be a People *Nigh* to Him, And yet he could not be *worſe Served*, by any that are *Afar off*, but his Name is more *Dreadful among the Heathen:* Tho *Religion* then is not to be *Gawdy*, yet we muſt not ſtrip it ſo Naked, (under pretence of *Spirituality*,) that it appear in no *Decent Garb:* Nor make *Irreverence*, and a Worſhip without any *Becoming Circumſtances*; the diſtinguiſhing *Note* of a Godly man. For that is the way to bring all our Religion under a juſt *Suſpicion*; when we carry towards the great Adorable *Object* of it, as if we had no *Awe* of Him, nor *Regard* or *Love* to Him. *Curſed is he that doth the Work of the Lord ſo Negligently.* At his *Peril* it is, who meddles not with the *Worſhip* of God, but to *Expoſe* and *Blaſpheme* it: and Wo be to that man whoſe very *Oblations* are the higheſt *Provocations.*

SECT. IV.

Of Praying, without taking care of our Living.

THE Bleſſed God who *Lacketh nothing*, ſtands not in ſuch Need of men's *Services*, as to accept the Preſent that is all Soiled with *Filthy Hands*. When he accepts nothing indeed from us, but only to do us a *Kindneſs*: and makes us much more *Beholden* to Him, to take *Notice* of our Offering, than ever we can *Oblige* Him with the Service. He will Abhor even our *Holy things*, if we Abhor his *Holy Ways*. Therefore when we are off our *Knees*, the Apoſtle cautions us, to take heed how we *Walk*. 1 Pet. 1. 17. *If ye Call upon the Father, who, without reſpect of perſons judgeth according to every man's work, Paſs the time of your Sojourning here in Fear.* All the Religion of wicked men, is upon their *Knees*, without looking to their *Steps*. They may ſometimes ſhew Devout in their *Prayers*, who yet are moſt Profligate in their *Lives*, and uſe their Offices, only as a *Cloak* for their Sins, and to *Compound* with the Divine Juſtice, for *Going on ſtill in their Treſpaſſes*: *Depoſiting their Pageant-like Piety in the Church, only to make a Shew with on Holidays*. But ſuch as are ſo *Rotten* and *corrupt* at Heart, and quite

Pref. to Cauſ. of Decay of Chriſt. Pi.

quite out in the very *Drift* and *tenour* of their Life, muſt not think to put off the Holy *Jealous God*, with a parcel of Good Words, and Demure Looks, and fine Poſtures. He will ſcorn all the Prayers of ſuch as caſt off his *Fear*, and diſregard his *Holy Word*. They ſhall cry in vain for *his Help*, that neglect their honeſt Endeavors to *Help themſelves*. They that *Truſt in the Lord*, and do no *Good*, but preſume that *Chriſt* will Save them, againſt his own *Goſpel*, are a ſort of Worſhippers, that are like to find as little Succeſs in their *Praying*, as God finds Integrity and Piety in their *Walking*. Their *Carnal Living* ſpoils all their *Spiritual Worſhipping*. They ſhall find ſmall *Welcome* with Him, when they love to be moſt *Unlike* Him. When they cannot abide his *Friends*. And love none ſo well as the Worſt of his *Enemies*: Nay can Blaſphemouſly *Swear* elſewhere as faſt by the *Name* of their *Maker*, as they *Bow* mannerly at *Church* to the *Name* of their *Saviour*. And when they take on them to Pray the *Lord to have Mercy upon* them, for *Taking his Name in Vain*, and to *Incline their Hearts to keep that Law*, and yet are ſo far from *Minding* what they Say, that preſently after, in the accuſtomed manner, they fall *Foul* upon Him, and make nothing of it, to *Play* with that tremendous Name, as their *Bable*. O how *Vain* are their Oblations? What Abomination is their *Incenſe*? Yea, what *Iniquity* even their Solemn Meeting?

ing? As good they *Slew a Man, as Kill'd an Ox: or Cut off a Dogs neck, as Sacrific'd a Lamb.* Isa. 66. 3. *If any man be a Worshipper of God, and do his Will, him he Heareth,* Joh. 9. 31. The only acceptable *Worshippers,* are Conscientious *Dealers,* and inoffensive, useful, holy *Livers.* They must keep their Hearts in Awful obedient Frame at *All times,* who would find them ready for the Service of God, at *Prayer-Times.* And such as live in *God's Eye* and presence, and are so much Concerned and taken up with Him, Dare not do the *Ill things* which, they know, would spoil all their Welcome with Him, and Turn his *Face against them.* They that would not have God's Grace *Wanting to them,* must be careful, that they be not *Wanting to his Grace,* and not think to have what they will, in their *Prayers,* who do what they list, in their *Lives.* Nor use their Prayers. to save them the *Labour* of doing any thing else in the *Religious practice*; but to get *Strength* for the performance of all their other *Offices.* Psal. 119. 145. *I Cried with my whole heart, Hear me O Lord, I will keep thy Statutes.* He askt not leave to *Offend,* but such Mercy as might Enable and Encourage him, with an Enlarged heart, *To run the way of God's Commands.* Our Prayers being but *Instrumental* duties, therefore our Religion does not consist only in going over our Offices, *of Course,* but is to make us *Like* our Heavenly Father, as like as ever we can be, both in *Being,* and in *Doing* Good.

To

To keep up a *Face* of Religious Worſhip then, and a *Circulation* of ſome Cuſtomary performances, which we are got into a Road of going over, and to take up with ſo much done, diſcharging the work, but for it's *own ſake*; Rids no *Ground*, makes not the leaſt Way, Nor brings us ever the Nearer to the Bleſſed *End*. If we mind not further purpoſes, to which ſuch Exerciſes are Intended, we uſe them to *no purpoſe*. Nay if we make our Prayers our *Saviours*, and *Reſt* in them, and *Truſt* to them: They do but lie in our way, to hinder us from the only true *Saviour*. When we ſhould uſe them, but as the *Boats* and *Bridges*, to help us over to him, and as the *Bucket* to draw out of his Infinite *Fullneſs*: Not only to *Evidence* the Grace that we have received, but to *Get ſtill More* that we have need of. For ſuch indeed is the *Raggedneſs* and inſufficiency of all our Services, that we extreamly want a Saviour to help us out, and even to Attone for the *Iniquities of our Holy things*, after we have done our Beſt; all which is unavailable to Salvation, if the *Lord Jeſus* be not our *Strength and our Redeemer*. 'Tis mercy therefore from the Lord, to let us ſee the *Cracks* and *Flaws*, the Frailties and Imperfections of our beſt Performances; that we may not *Erect* our *Plumes*, and be Proud of our Prayers, nor *Acquieſce* in them, nor too much *Value* ourſelves upon them.

But when men only *Talk* of Believing in *Chriſt*, but never do it: And when they boldly

Sin

Sin on, and *Truſt* to their *Prayers* and Offices, and Confeſs and Pray for *Pardon*, and ſo to it again; and make their accuſtomed Prayers a *Super-ſedeas* to holy Practice, and the Leaves, not to *Heal*, but to *Hide* their Sins; thinking the little Services of courſe muſt ſet them right ſtill, and make *Amends* for all: *Publicans* and *Harlots* may get to Heaven, before ſuch *Formaliſts*, that ſo Profane Prayers, to Uſe them, without ſo much as *Minding* to grow better in the Uſe of them. For no entring into the Kingdom of Heaven, *Except our Righteouſneſs exceed the Righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees.* And how is it that we muſt *Out-do* them? Not in Faſting oftner, or Praying Longer, and making more ado about Forms and Ceremonies, and external Obſervances; in which who more *Critical* and *Exact* than they? But we muſt *Exceed* them, in being *Honeſter* men, and Aiming at Righter *Ends*, and leading Better *Lives*. And not do the ſeemingly *Right* and *Good* things, from falſe *Motives*, and with ill *Deſigns*: But make our Prayers the *Rule* of our Practice, *Endeavouring* to do, what we Pray God to *Enable* us for the doing: And as we Beg his Help, ſo *Stirring up the Grace of God that is in us*, and putting forth all the Strength we have, to *Help* ourſelves.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

Licentiouſneſs concerning the Succeſs *of Prayer.*

SOME men will Pray no longer than they taſte the *Sweetneſs* of it, and are *Drill'd* on by the Pleaſure that they find in it. If themſelves be not *Favoured*, their *Humour* fitted, and their *Requeſts* granted, they take *Pett* at Heaven, and are ready to *Quarrel* even with God himſelf, as if they were not duly *Attended*, and therefore greatly *Wronged*. Like the King of *Iſrael* who flung away in a Chafe, 2 King. 6. 33. Saying, *This evil is of the Lord, why ſhould I wait for the Lord any longer?* Such *Proud Beggars* are many of God's Petitioners, that think themſelves too Good to *Wait*, thô it be upon the *Moſt High*: and muſt have Him at their *Beck*, or elſe have not the Patience to Stay his *Time*, and take Mercy in his *Way*: But muſt *Limit the Holy One*, and go to *Raviſh* and Snatch the Bleſſing out of his hand. But our Bleſſed *Saviour* hath taught us more Manners and Grace, *That men ought to Pray always, and not to Faint.* *Luk.* 18. 1. Nor think it Long, to tarry his *Leiſure*, who has waited ſo Long for our *Return*. If we but *Know* ourſelves, and Remember our *Sins*, how Ill we merit to be *Regarded* at all, We ſhall wonder that *Ever* we

we are Heard, instead of grumbling, that it is no *Sooner* or *Better*. Nay we shall see occasion to turn our Complaining into *Thanksgiving*, and not be all upon the *Craving* for more, without Acknowledging, how much we have *Received*, and how little we have *Deserved*. Sinful men are very Bold, to *Ask* all before them, and not remember to Humble themselves, in the *Confession* of their Sins, nor *Recount* the Mercies and Loving kindness of the Lord, and Admire and Bless and Praise him, for all that he has *Already* done for them. But to Pray, only as long as we are chear'd on with a *Briskness* of Spirits, and find our Souls filled as with *Marrow and Fatness*, is not to mind the Pleasing of our Lord, so much, as our own *Pleasure*. It is but to follow *Christ* for the *Loaves*, or Drawn only with the *Savour of his Sweet Ointments*. Not in the Sense of *Duty*, and our Obligation continually to wait upon him, with what *Face* soever he is pleased to look upon us. 'Tis not for poor *Beggars* that Live all upon him, and have nothing but from him, Yea for *Obnoxious* Sinners that have Forfeited all, and are out of *Hell* only thro' his Mercy, to be so High and touchy and *Querulous*, if all is not done strait to our *Mind*, and we have not every thing just according to our *Wishes*. It is not such a *Violence* that will ever take the *Kingdom of Heaven*: But the Humble Importunity, the Unwearied Waiting, and

Patient

Patient Continuance in Well doing. And this is Pleaſing in the ſight of *God*, to Follow him even when he ſeems *Diſpleaſed* with us, and not Leave off our *Prayers* thô we think he looks *Angry* at them. But *As the eyes of Servants look to the hand of their Maſters, and as the eyes of a Maiden to the hand of her Miſtreſs, So let our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, untill he have Mercy upon us.* Pſal. 123. 2.

CHAP. VIII.

Licentiouſneſs in flying out againſt our Fellow-Worſhippers.

MEN that are *Proudly opinioned* of themſelves will take mightily upon them, fiercely to *Rally* at all, that Serve not God, juſt in their *Mode.* Some all for *Common-Prayer*, and ſome for none but *Conceived Prayers.* And they cannot forbear bitterly to *Teaſe* and *Perſecute* one another, as if it were worſe than *No Prayer*, that is not exactly after ſuch a *Manner.* Yea ſo Abſurd are many to fill the World with Heats and *Quarrels* about the *Way* of others Worſhip, that were never ſerious in any Worſhip of their *Own*, And think they have done a great matter to make the Party *Odious*, that is *Oppoſite* to theirs.

But

But the queſtion is, What *Service* is thus done to Religion? And how much Devotion is a *Gainer* by it? We know how Strict and Nice were the *Phariſees* for the *Out-ſide Religion*, Tho none had fouler *In-ſides* than they. Who more took upon them to Quarrel even with *Chriſt* himſelf! And would be Holier than the *Holy One of God.* Who more *Bitter* againſt *Better men* than themſelves? And what a mad Zeal had *Paul* this way, before his Converſion? They that have only the *Form of Godlineſs*, will be like *Bears bereaved of their Whelps*, to have it taken from them, Becauſe if you ſtrip them of that, you leave them *Nothing*. They have but a *Name to Live*, and would you *Perſwade* them out of that? The very Worſt man that cries up their *Form*, ſhall pleaſe them better, than the Holieſt Chriſtian, that appears for the *Power of Godlineſs* it ſelf. And this makes the *Romiſh Worſhip* ſo Agreeable to *Licentious Livers*, That the Offices may go on, and the *Heart* be otherwiſe taken up the while. The Inner man may *Sleep*, while the Outer is ſo *Concerned.* And all done to Satisfaction, tho not a *Sin* wounded, nor a *Luſt* diſturbed, nor any *Grace* exerciſed. It is enough to turn the Stomachs of all *Serious Good men*, againſt that *Cauſe*, which the *Roaring Blades* are the great *Champions* and hot *Sticklers* for. And O how does even a *Good Cauſe* often ſuffer by ſuch ill *Abettors?* and loſe its Credit for their Sakes?

Sakes? I cannot but call in queſtion my *Zeal*, when it ſtrikes in with the *Blaſphemies* of a *Swearer*, or the *Revilings* of a *Drunkard*, and pleaſes them better than any elſe. To *Stigmatize* Perſons, and *Ridicule* their Way, makes me never the Better, nor my Way, at all, the *Lovelier*. If I have a *Zeal of God according to Knowledge*, I may find room enough to ſhew my *Strictneſs*, without ſpending all the *Mettle*, in that which leaſt Deſerves it. The ſharpeſt *Drolls* are not the Happieſt *Teachers*, Nor is he the *Beſt Chriſtian*, that makes the *Lowdeſt Cry* againſt others. *Satyrical* and *Dogmatical* Doctors ſhew too little of his Spirit, who was *Meek and Lowly* in *Heart*. But we may know whence the *Wiſdom* comes, that is *Earthly*, *Senſual*, *Deviliſh*. To call every thing that I diſlike by an *Opprobrious* filthy Name, and ſpend my *Choller* upon it, may ſhew that I want a *Purge* my ſelf. But where Contending Parties *Overdo*, in their Heats on both Sides, I do not think I am obliged to depart from *Truth* or *Peace*, to Side and *Ingratiate* my ſelf with either. As long as the great *Lord* of the Church doth not *Intereſs* himſelf in the *Fiery Diſputes*, for Forms or againſt them, Who art thou that *Condemneſt* what he does not? Or layeſt the Main *Streſs* on that which he *Leaſt* Regards? Where doth he warrant thee to Deſpiſe any good Prayer, becauſe it is a *Form*, or *Impoſed*? Or where does he give thee licenſe to *Scoff* the Effuſi-

on, that is more at *Liberty?* In good truth, What is even this, but a *Form* to the Company, and *Impoſed* upon them? I dare not call him a *Graceleſs Formaliſt*, that uſes Forms; Nor him a *Proud Hypocrite* that uſes none. For I am ſatisfied, that *Forms* may be uſed piouſly, without *Formality*. And as there may be the *Spirit* of Prayer, without a *Form*, So there may be natural or *Feveriſh* Heat, without the *Spiritual* Fervour. It is not *Utterance* that makes a *Saint*; Nor Crying up *Church-Orders*, that muſt needs make one a true *Member* of *Chriſt's Church*. I am equally Diſtaſted at both, That call Praying by Habit, *Whining and Cant:* and that call the Liturgy, *Pottage and Idolatry*. I dare not *Deride* Prayer, thô it be not *Cookt* exactly to my Guſt, nor Dreſt juſt in my *Mode*. Nor can I count it the Effect of real *Piety*, to be forward in *Drolling* upon any *Holy things*. Prayer is *A kind of Tune which all things Hear and Fear*. Herb. I know I cannot Worſhip without Faults of my *Own*, and yet I muſt not therefore leave off all *Worſhip*. And if I will not bear with *Another's* Failings, but fly from all Worſhip that is *Faulty*, With whom then ſhall I *Communicate* on Earth? But if the other perform not his *Part* aright, the Fault is not *mine*. And my *Joyning* with him, is no Engagement upon me, to give my *Conſent* and *Approbation* to all that ever I Hear from him. Yet if I am indeed *Athirſt*, I ſhall not refuſe

good

good Drink, tho it have ſome *Smack* of the *Cask.* And I ſhould, methinks, be more Wary than Wiſe, never to truſt any *Phyſitian* or *Proctor*, becauſe it is *Poſſible* they may Abuſe me: Nor ever to *Joyn* with another in Prayer, becauſe I know not before-hand, all that he will Say, nor can tell but a Word may drop that I do not *Like.* I will uſe my own Words, Yet I will not be ſo tied to them neither, but if I find others better than my own, I will not ſcruple to take them. When I am Conſcious, It is not out of *Lazineſs*, to ſave trouble, and take what is *Next me*, But to Serve *God* with that which I count the *Beſt.* I muſt not preſently be out of *Conceit* with all that I hear *Derided.* For ſome that are counted the *Ingenious* and *Well-bred* men can Scoff at *Scripture* as well as *Prayer:* Yea and *Deſcant* on the words of *Common-Prayer*, as well as thoſe of other Prayers. I care not who make themſelves *Merry* with that, wherewith I find my ſelf *Edified.* Licentious tongues *Beſpatter* all. But the moſt curious and haſty to Cenſure and Carp at *Others*, are commonly the moſt Careleſs at *Home*, and the *Faireſt Marks* to be hit themſelves.

The PERORATION, *with a Call to Moderation and Devotion.*

I Have pleaded for that *Liberty* which may do us a *Kindneſs:* and alſo have made ſome *Strictures* upon the *Licenſe* for which we may all be the *Worſe.* That which is moſt *Sweet* may ſooneſt give us a *Surfeit.* And therefore thô it is an Injury to be abridged of the *Diet*, yet we muſt not think it hard to be cautioned againſt the *Exceſs.* I mean not the Exceſs of *Praying*, againſt which I ſee no need to give Warning: For I know no *Euchitæ* now to *Capitulate* with, and convince them that Prayer is not to *ſwallow* up all other Offices. To think we muſt do nothing but *Pray*, is not to *Overſtretch* the Liberty of Prayer, but to *pinch* and *Grind* upon it. Whereas it will admit of *Pauſes*, and yet be *Inceſſant* too, in the *Apoſtle*'s Senſe. As the *Natural* Heart is in perpetual *Motion*, thô it has its *Syſtole* as well as *Diaſtole*, and the *Contraction* doth but help the *Dilatation:* So Prayer is as the *Pulſe* of the *Pious* Heart, and ſtill the *Circulation* goes on: nor are the little *Breaks* and Interruptions any Hindrance: but only a gathering of freſh *Strength* for the work, that it may go on more *Lively*, and the Heart throw out, what it hath been Gathering

thering in, more *Vigorouſly*. But there is little danger of Praying too *Much* or too *Often*. A ſmall ſtock of *Prudence* with a great Senſe of *Want*, and *Love* of Prayer, will teach any well-diſpoſed Chriſtian to be his own *Caſuiſt* in this matter. All the danger lies in another *Extream*, of flying out into the *Wide ways*, which I have been endeavouring to *Bar up*. No fear leaſt Prayer ſhould be laid too *Common*, for every one freely to uſe it: But leaſt the Liberty ſhould be *Abuſed*, by the Wild *Beaſts of the People*, whom no Incloſure can hold, but they muſt break thrô all Fences, and will not accept of any Liberty as room enough for them, unleſs the Extenſion be *in Infinitum*. Unreaſonable Creatures! that cannot be contented with a fair Open *Way* to go in, nay and a Large and Wide *Field* wherein to *Expatiate*, but they muſt be abſolutely Lawleſs, and *Sui Juris*. Let ſuch complain they have not *More* Liberty: No matter; as long as they that know Better things, ſee cauſe to Rejoyce and give Thanks that they have *ſo Much*. The Priviledge of ſuch *Freedom in Prayer*, as I have laid open, is a Bleſſing and Favour indeed, that we cannot enough *Acknowledge* and *Value*. O that ever any ſhould be *Liſtleſs* to it, or *Weary* of it! And what *Enemies* to Souls, and a *Miſchief* to the World are they, that ſay or do any thing to *Diſgrace* or *Hinder* it? to take men off it, to put them out of conceit with it, and turn them againſt it?

Let who will *Exaggerate* the Miſchiefs of this *Liberty*, and with never ſo keen *Invectives* Declaim againſt the *Vindicators* of it, as the Authors of Confuſion and Ruin to the *Church*: We are not by this means to be *Scar'd* and *Ruffled* out of the dear *Purchaſe* of our great *Redeemer*'s Blood. We can as eaſy cry *Slavery*, as they do *Anarchy*. But I hope it will never ſpoil and undo us, to have Liberty to *Say* our Prayers, yea and to *Pray* them too. God be thanked, we belong not to a *Church* that ſupports it ſelf by *Tyranny* and *Uſurpation*, but by the *Goſpel-Doctrine* and *Moderation*: (Wiſely taking in the Advantages both of a *Liturgy*, and of *Conceived Prayers*: and ſo avoiding the Inconveniencies to which the *Sole uſe* of either might be liable.) However ſome of her Sons *Degenerate* into a much worſe Temper, and grow ſo *Fierce* and *Stern*, to *catch their Fellow-ſervants by the Throat*, if they do not *Say* juſt as they do, and *Move* not exactly Like themſelves. And thô they would bring an *Odium* upon their *Mother*, and make her taken for an *Imperious*, cruel *Step dame*, Where does ſhe give them any ſuch *Inſtructions*? and what little cauſe has ſhe to thank them for being ſo *Officious*, in helping to make a *Servile* Brood of *Ingenuous* Children? 'Tis not indeed our *Church*, but ſome that ſo *Over-ſtretch* things in it, who would *Invade* our Liberty. And ſo we muſt be in Bondage to a *Set* of men, that have early Imbib'd Principles of *Slavery* themſelves,

themſelves, and can never be quiet, till they have *Clubb*'d all into their *Mind* and *Way*. But let ſuch *Overdoers* take heed they prove not in the end, worſe *Undoers* of the Church, than any of thoſe they ſo much declare their deadly *Fears* of. To Vindicate the *Liberty of the Goſpel*, will never Hurt any *Church of Chriſt*. None but the *Antichriſtian Church*, and ſuch as *Symbolize* therewith, can be againſt it. But 'tis equally *Rebellion* againſt the *Lord* of the *Church*, To offer to *Retrench* that Liberty which we have in *Chriſt Jeſus*; and to take the Lawleſs Liberty of the *Servants of Sin*, who are *free from Righteouſneſs*: Or to make that Liberty an *Occaſion to the Fleſh*, which is not indeed a Liberty *to Sin*, but *from it*. Deliver'd we are, but not to *commit Abominations*. And the *Son of God has made us Free indeed*: Tho not to walk in the *ways of our Hearts*, *and the ſight of our Eyes*: But to Serve him *Spontaneouſly*, as a *Willing people We are not under the Law*, *but under Grace*. It's true. Yet muſt we not therefore turn the *Grace of God into Wantonneſs*, nor *continue in Sin*, *that Grace may abound*. God forbid he ſhould ſo Loſe his *Glory*, by granting us *Liberty*. Tho where the *Spirit of the Lord is*, *there is Liberty*, Yet if it be the Spiritual Liberty, ſuch as our Bleſſed *Saviour* has Bought us, Be ſure it will never be turn'd againſt *Piety*, *Loyalty*, *Sobriety*, *Honeſty*, or *Charity*. However we may *uſe or forbear* our

Liberty in things Indifferent, thereafter as we are like to do Good or Hurt with the uſe: and yet ſtill have it all one to ourſelves, as if we did put it in *continual Exerciſe*. As to the *Inner* man, indeed, we muſt not be made *Servants to any*; But for the *Outer*, we ſhould make ourſelves *Servants even to all*. I ſay then, as the *Apoſtle* does of Faith, Haſt thou *Liberty? have it to thy ſelf before God.* And that is enough to preſerve it fair and Entire *in his Sight.* And as long as thou art well aware, That no *Traditions* of Men can bind thy Conſcience, ſo as the Laws of *God*, Tho thou *Submitteſt to every Ordinance of man*, it being for the *Lord's Sake*, Thou doſt not *Give up* any Freedom which *Chriſt* thy *Lord* would have thee to *Hold faſt*: But tho thou art not to Say, and to Do every where juſt as thy *Liſt*, (thou muſt dread to be ſuch a *Libertine*, ſo left Looſe to *Undo* thy ſelf:) Yet ſtill thou enjoyeſt that *Liberty of Prayer* which I Plead for, as long as thou canſt but go with Hope and Comfort to *God*, as a *Child*, Notwithſtanding that in many things thou haſt fail'd and offended, and ſo *Misbehaved* thy ſelf, thou canſt not chuſe but be *Conſcious* how unworthy thou art to be owned in that *Relation.*

Forget not then how Vile and Sinful, how *Diminutive* and Contemptible, how even *Nothing*, and worſe than Nothing, thou art: Be as apprehenſive as thou wilt, or canſt be,

be, of thy own *Demerits*; that thou maiſt ever approach the *Majeſty of Heaven*, with a becomming *Awe*, and ſerve thy God, who is a *Conſuming Fire*, *with Reverence and Godly Fear.*

But withal Remember, That in Prayer, thou art going to thy *Father*; Diſpleaſed, indeed, at thy *Sins*, but Reconciled in his *Son.* And having ſo great a *Friend*, and ſo good an *Intereſt* in Heaven, tho thou thinkeſt thy ſelf Unworthy to *Look up* thither, Yet with the *Publican*, cry for *Mercy to thee a Sinner.* And after all the *Miſchief* done thee by thy Sins, let them not quite *Ruine* thy Soul, by taking thee off thy *Prayers.* But the more *Senſible* thou art of Sin, cry the more mightily unto *God.* Yea from the very *Magnitude* of it, (that makes it look moſt againſt thee,) thou haſt a *Plea* put into thy Mouth, *Pſal.* 25. 11. *For thy Name Sake, O Lord, Pardon my Sin, for it is Great.* He does not go about to *Palliate* and Excuſe his Guilt, and cry, Lord it is but a *Small matter*, therefore thou maiſt Eaſily paſs it by; (He was Wiſer and Better, than ſo to Argue:) But my Caſe is Bad and Sad, My Sin is *Heinous* and *Grievous*, paſt all Help and Cure in the World, but *Thine*, who art never at a *Loſs* to Effect what we would have: Too *Great* for any, but the God infinitely *Great and Good*, to Forgive. There is no Good in me, to *Invite* thee to do it for me: O do it therefore for thy *Glory*, even to Glorify thy

Power

Power and *Mercy*: That where *Sin hath Abounded*, thy *Grace* may Triumph, in *Superabounding*. And then what can Spoil the *Freedom of thy Prayers*, when thy very *Sins* may be turned into *Arguments*, not only to *Haſten* thee to the Throne of Grace, but alſo to *Prevail* for thee there? Thus thou haſt all the reaſon in the world, to Beg hard for *Mercy*, now in this only *Time* of Mercy: and thou haſt all *Encouragements* too on every ſide thee, upon thy *Seeking*, to find it.

Whatever thou haſt *Been*, and however thou haſt *Done*, Yet thy caſe would not be *Deſperate*, didſt thou Return, upon thy Submiſſion, with the *Prodigal*, to thy *Father*: And not only *Confeſs* thou haſt Sinned, but *Beg* and cry Mightily to be *Reincorporate* of his Family, and numbred among his *Servants*. Then matters would *Clear up* with thee, and Heavenly Hopes would *Dawn* upon thee, and *Mercy*, on every ſide, Embrace thee, and our God would *Abundantly Pardon*. For he delights to be ſo *Won* with a poor Sinner's Cries; and *Waits to be Gracious*, that we may Remember ourſelves, and let him have the *Opportunity*, to Glorify his Mercy in our Recovery.

But O Sick, and ſadly Diſtemper'd are the *Souls*, and Rueful and Ruinous is their *Caſe*, to whom *Prayers* are a *Burthen* and affliction, and who are out of *Conceit* with all that ſhould do them Good, and *Prejudiced* againſt the very *Means* of their Salvation! Even ready to be *Undone*,

done, and yet Liſtleſs to ſeek for *Remedy*, having no Heart nor Tongue to cry to Him that alone is *Able* to help them.

To Conclude then, Not only *Believe* and own, but take and *Uſe* the Liberty granted, and make thy *Benefit* of it. *Down with thy Knees, up with thy Voice.* Herb. And do not lie and Periſh in thy *Sins*, for want of thy *Prayers*. But being *Permitted to Speak for thy ſelf*, O Prize the Happy Priviledge, and with all Thankfulneſs and gladneſs, catch hold of ſuch an *Advantage*. Let not *Prayer* (as the *Poet* ſaid of Probity,) be *Prais'd* and *Starv'd*: After the manner of ſuch as will cry, God forbid we ſhould Neglect our *Prayers*, We muſt Pray *Every where*: When God knows, that in good truth they Pray *no where*. But their Chambers and Families, their own Houſes, and God's too, can *Teſtify* againſt them, that they are no *Lovers* of this Exerciſe, nor were ever any *Well willers* to Prayer. But do thou give it a *real Commendation*, as thou doſt to the *Beloved Fare* that pleaſes thee beſt, by *Feeding Heartily* upon it. And not only *Talk* of Praying, but *Do it*. Nor only in a *Fit*, or on the *By*, But make a *Serious* and *Solemn* Buſineſs of it. And Ply and Follow it, like one that is in *Love* with it, and Fond and Greedy of it, even as a *Miſer* is of the greateſt *Lucre*, or an *Epicure* of the Choiceſt *Dainties*. O whither ſhould the *Cold* and *Hungry* go, but to the *Fire*, and to the *Table*? And whither ſhould the *Obnoxious* and *Guilty* repair, but to the God that *Pardons Iniquity*,

quity, *Tranſgreſſion and Sin*? with whom is *Forgiveneſs that he may be Feared*. Whither ſhould they Betake themſelves, that want *Every thing*, but to Him that is the Poſſeſſor of *All things*? And as we count our Meat does us *Good*, when we come to it with a Good *Stomach*, So to have ſuch a good *Appetite* to our Prayers, will make them *Salutary*, and the Savour of Life to our Souls.

O never think much to *Leave* all, to go unto Him whom thy *Soul Loveth*: But ſay, *Welcome* Sweet and Dear *Prayer*, Come bring me to *my God*, to Converſe with Him, to Draw from him, and to Receive what he is not only infinitely *Full* of, but as *Inclinable* to make his poor Creatures Happy with. Let it be the moſt pleaſant *Entertainment* of thy Life, which thou need'ſt not be *Spurred* on to, But ſet thy *Mind* upon it, have thy *Heart* in it, and make it the *Solace* of thy Soul, to be taken up with thy *God*. Let the *God of all Grace* hear thee every day at his *Gates*, There Throw thy ſelf, and lie and Cry, and never leave off thy *Prayers*, till they be turn'd into his *Everlaſting Praiſes*, and thou haſt no more to *Beg*, but all thy work will be For ever to *Bleſs His Name*, For Anſwering thee in all the *Wiſhes* of thy Heart.

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